

COLONEL RAWLIN'S SON.

BY RUTH CROSBY DOANE.

"You are a lucky girl, Grace," said her friend, Kate Grosvenor, "for your guardian is not only a rich, but a cultured gentleman. Col. Rawlin is my ideal man."

Grace Cathaway elevated her pretty eyebrows at this rhapsody.

"Well, well, Katy, he may be a very Chesterfield for ought I care. Of course, seeing that I am to be an inmate of his house for several months, I should rather he would be a trifle gallant than not."

"A trifle gallant!" echoed Kate. "If he does n't overwhelm you with attentions ere a week is over, I'll lose my guess."

"I detest an old beau!" said Grace. "Your young man following a girl with his foolish glances and sweet speeches is bad enough, but an aged simpleton!"

In her disgust, words failed her.

The two girls were sitting on the deck of a homeward-bound steamer. Kate Grosvenor was returning from a flying trip to Paris, where she had picked up her old-time playmate, Grace Cathaway, for *compagnon de voyage* home.

She turned now, and studied Grace attentively; noted the proud face and stylish figure of her friend. Some fancy pleased her, and Grace caught her smiling glance.

"Well, Kate, dost like the picture?"

"Almost as well as I do another hung up in memory's picture gallery. Wait until I come back."

She soon re-appeared, with a large album which she laid in her friend's lap.

"Now pick out our octogenarian, if you please."

Grace searched the masculine faces attentively, and closed the book with puzzled eyes.

"I remember him but faintly, Kate. He was a stern-looking young man in those days, with blonde hair, pale blue eyes, and beardless face. Let me see; it was fully eighteen years ago. He is not here, I should say."

"Well, your aged simpleton is just forty-five, looks thirty, and here he is."

Grace looked, and the surprise on her face changed to pleased recognition.

"It is the same face, and yet it is not. He was never so splendid as that, Kate."

"It takes years to perfect such men as Col. Rawlin. He is quite bald, but not all gray. Those side whiskers are blonde, and his eyes are deeply, darkly, desperately blue."

Grace was still looking attentively at the picture.

"There are deep lines between the eyes," said she, "and a cruel curve to the lips."

"You are hypercritical, Grace. The cruel curves can melt into the most tender of smiles, as you may find out to your cost some day."

Grace gave an incredulous little smile.

"Is he alone at Beech Acres?"

"No: there is Mrs. Macey, his sister, to play propriety. It is somewhat singular that we are to be near neighbors in this way. If you get sick of staying at the old place, come to me, Grace."

So the conversation ended; not to be renewed until many days after.

In the bustle of landing, and days spent amidst the whirl of New-York life, Grace had almost forgotten Kate's laughing remarks until they were forcibly recalled to her.

"Col. Rawlin," announced a servant one morning, as Grace was contemplating a shopping trip.

She stepped forward with a slight shyness foreign to her usual manner.

A tall, soldierly-looking man met her, and spoke, as she raised her eyes to his.

"Is it possible that this is my old-time pet? Why, Miss Cathaway, I hardly dare claim this tall, grown-up young lady as my ward."

"The fact of your guardianship has sat lightly upon you all these years," laughed Grace. "I could not recall you at all, until I received that kind letter from you in Naples, after my dear aunt's death."

"Yes: I knew then that my stewardship was a sinecure no longer. I wished for your presence at Beech Acres, and so dared write requesting it. That is stating the business part of it; but," he added, in a

kinder tone, noting tears in her dark eyes, "I shall hope to make you happy with us. We thought that in your loneliness a home might seem attractive, even if it were as dull a one as Beech Acres threatens to be."

Grace felt grateful for this unlooked-for kindness.

"I am always happy with friends, Col. Rawlin; and Beech Acres, from all accounts, must be a romantic old place. I yet have a dim recollection of its odd corners and wonderful rooms."

"Yes: you were a dark, wild little rogue. Do you remember that you were a mortal enemy of mine in those days?"

"No, I have forgotten it, if I ever exhibited such bad taste," laughed Grace; but how vividly she remembered it in after days!

Two weeks passed away, and Grace had been presented to Mrs. Macey and the household at Beech Acres; found the old house a slow but delightful place, and had called on all the neighbors, Kate Grosvenor included, besides scouring the beautiful country for miles around.

Col. Rawlin proved an attentive host and a devoted gallant; but as most of his time was spent in town, Grace had many leisure hours.

She was returning from a visit to Kate, one morning, when her attention was attracted by the figure of a man waiting just inside the gate. She gave him one quick glance as she drove past, then turned to look again.

It was a strange face, Grace decided. It might have belonged to an old man from its careworn, pained expression, had it not been for the youthful fire of the eyes that brightened at the glance of her own.

She saw that he had advanced as if about to speak, and involuntarily drew rein.

"Have you forgotten an old comrade, Miss Cathaway?" were his words, spoken in a deep, rich voice.

The eyes that looked into his were full of kindness, yet there was no recognition in their puzzled glance.

"Surely there is some mistake, sir. I have no old friends in America. I have lived abroad these eighteen years."

"And yet, during all those years, I have not forgotten. I can never forget the many punishments you bore for me in those dear old days; the battles you fought and won in my defence, Miss Cathaway. I often

see, in fancy, an old-fashioned little maid, in check apron and b.g bonnet, waiting on a certain spoiled boy, never tiring of his peevishness, always brave and patient with his changing moods."

Grace leaned her head upon her hand, in deep thought. Finally, a faint recognition dawned upon her face.

"Yes, yes," she cried, after a slight pause, "it was here in these very woods. How happy we were together. Wallace, Wallace, I know you now. How could I have forgotten you? How strange that the very fact of your existence had passed from me, until now. It seems all like a dream; but, after the few happy days you have recalled, it is dark, dark."

The young man had reached the phaeton, and stood leaning upon the back of the seat. There was a deep fire in his blue eyes, and a tremor in his voice, husky with emotion.

"The darkness has passed away from you, Grace Cathaway, but it has blackened my life, and cursed it forever!"

"Oh, hush!" cried Grace, shocked and pained. "You must not talk so, Wallace. But take up the story from that last day we spent in these woods together. It is all clear until then; but if you do not help me to recall it the horror and mystery will kill me."

"Do not let me pain you, child," he said in a kinder voice, "or I shall blame myself bitterly for yielding to the sweet temptation of knowing you again; of feeling, that, crippled, wretched as I am, I can yet have your pity, perhaps some day be blessed with a share of your friendship."

At the word crippled, Grace glanced at his foot which hung limp and helpless at his side. As he felt her glance his face flushed still more painfully.

"But you wish my story," he continued in a lower voice. "Well, do you remember as I do, I wonder, a certain morning, so many years ago? It was the last bright day I ever knew, Grace, and the birds never before or since sang so sweetly, for they were chanting our wedding march, and we, two foolish, happy children, were playing baby-house together."

Grace's eyes, dilating and bright, followed his every look, and involuntarily she laid one hand upon his.

"Yes, yes, Wallace. I remember. Go on."

"I see, as you doubtless do, a stern, hard-

looking man coming toward us. He was never a father to me, Grace. Would Col. Rawlin own a chicken-hearted coward for a son, think you? A boy who shrank from physical pain as from torment; a milk-sop who cannot to this day see a drop of blood without turning sick and faint? He hated me 'even at that early time for not being what he would have me. He hates me still more bitterly today."

He controlled a sob with a great effort, and Grace's eyes were full of tears.

"I can remember now the sneer on his handsome face as he raises his foot and demolishes our pretty home with a kick.

"What, playing doll-baby with the girls, are you, Wallace? Confound you! but I'll teach you something else this morning if you die in the attempt!"

"I wonder if that picture of that morning ever haunts him now, or if it will rise up before him at his dying day? I could cry with self-pity and contempt as I recall myself a poor shrinking boy, on my knees before that father, imploring him to spare me. His face hardens, you kneel at his feet too, Grace, and, as he turns away you strike at him with your tiny fist.

"If you are a soldier's son," he mutters, 'you must have some grit in you. You shall learn to ride, boy; so up with you, and hang on for dear life.'

"In vain I shrink with terror from the vicious horse. I am settled in the large saddle, the reins placed in my weak hands, and, as my father raises his whip, I see you as in a dream far below, your little womanly face blurred with tears, and wild with fear and compassion."

Grace was all excitement now. She rose from her seat, and held her hands before her eyes.

"That is all," she cried wildly. "I can remember no more. For pity's sake tell me nothing, Wallace!"

"No; mercifully that is all you ever knew. A fever gave you a blessed forgetfulness, but I have borne it all these years. Those few moments made of me the miserable, misshapen wretch you see before you; a man whose very existence is a curse to the father who gave it."

Grace was silent for a moment.

"Strange that your father never mentioned you to me," she said at last.

"Oh, I prefer solitude," answered the young man bitterly; "and he—he blesses

me for it in his heart. He rarely sees me, Grace. I live alone."

"But it is unnatural, it is horrible!" cried Grace. "It has made of you a cynic. O Wallace, this must all be changed."

"Changed!" sneered he. "You cannot change this!" striking at his helpless foot. "No," said Grace sadly, gently, "but I can help you to bear it better perhaps."

A softened light came into his eyes.

"Yes, I know that you would help me if you could; but you little know how impossible it has become for me to mingle with other people. Col. Rawlin is a young, a handsome man, a favorite in society; and what should I be but a blot upon his and your life? No, Grace, your sympathy has been very sweet; I thank you for it,—but forgive me for darkening even one hour of your bright life, and forget me and my miserable existence if you can. And now, good-by."

He held her hand for a moment closely, then turned abruptly from her and took a path toward the woods.

Grace, bewildered, filled with mingled emotions of pity and affection, drove slowly to the house, half dazed with the morning's surprises.

That evening she introduced the subject rather abruptly to Mrs. Macey.

"Mrs. Macey, why doesn't Col. Rawlin's son join us evenings? Why is he so unsocial?"

Mrs. Macey turned very red and then pale.

"Mrs. Cathaway, really you are the most eccentric girl. Col. Rawlin's son is an invalid, and rarely leaves his rooms."

"But he was in the grounds this morning," persisted Grace.

Then in answer to Mrs. Macey's surprised look,—

"He was one of my earliest friends, and we renewed that friendship this afternoon."

"Ah," said Mrs. Macey, with her iciest smile. "Thanks, Miss Cathaway, for your notice of the poor boy; but his misfortunes have unfitted him for ladies' society, as I fear you discovered."

"I thought of nothing but his sorrows," said Grace shortly. "Could you not persuade him to join us evenings? Do, dear Mrs. Macey."

Mrs. Macey inwardly called Miss Cathaway a spoiled, disagreeable girl; but as she was anxious to propitiate the heiress this

whom was as easily gratified as any other. "I do not know," hesitatingly. "The sight of him is very painful to Col. Rawlin."

There was a deep intense fire in Grace's eyes, but she controlled herself with a great effort.

"I mean when his father is away, Mrs. Macey. We are often alone afternoons and evenings, and it might cheer him up a little."

"As you like," said Mrs. Macey. "I will request his presence in both our names, but I fear he will humiliate us by a refusal."

She drew her writing-desk toward her, and despatched a few words by a servant.

They waited a few moments, and then the disagreeable, incredulous smile on Mrs. Macey's face changed to a look of utter astonishment as the door opened and Wallace Rawlin stood upon the threshold.

He bowed coldly to his aunt, and spoke only a few words in answer to her many questions concerning his health; then held out one hand to Grace with a pleased smile.

"It was kind of you," was all he said, but she beamed a warm welcome from her place on the sofa, and emboldened by it he seated himself beside her.

They talked together in low tones; and, listen as she undoubtedly did for the next hour, Mrs. Macey found it impossible to follow their conversation.

This was but the first of many happy evenings for them both. Grace played the part of protector and friend to perfection; and Wallace Rawlin — how did he like his sweet patronage? It was difficult to tell.

One evening he would sit happily in her genial presence, the next it would require all her wit and ingenuity to cause even a smile to play around his stern lips.

"It has come at last, Kate."

"How you frighten one, Grace," laughed her friend, looking up in astonishment at Grace Cathaway's abrupt entrance. "What has come at last?"

"What you predicted. I have actually just run away from the distinguished honor of a proposal of marriage from Col. Rawlin. Marriage with him!"

Her full lip curled with scorn.

"Well, of course you said yes," exclaimed Kate quite eagerly. It had been a cherished plan of hers from the first. "O Gracie, I am so glad, so glad!"

"Save your histrionics," laughed Grace,

"and don't for mercy's sake hug me to death. The wedding has not transpired yet, and never will if one woman can be of the same mind for ten consecutive days."

She was in a strange mood between laughter and tears. Suddenly she sprang up with an exclamation of displeasure.

"There is Col. Rawlin at the gate now. I cannot, I will not return with him!"

Then, with a woman's consistency she stooped and kissed her friend, ran lightly down the stairs and out into the road to meet him.

Col. Rawlin drew one of her hands through his arm, and they walked on quietly together. As they reached his own gate he bent down to her with a glad, triumphant light in his eyes.

"I knew that you would come to meet me, Grace. Have you repented those cruel words of last evening? Say that you have, little one."

Then he added more confidently, "You know that you love me."

"Love you," she cried, drawing away from him. "Is it possible that you have mistaken me so utterly?"

For the first time he read aright the dislike and fear in her face.

An angry frown darkened his own.

"You did care for me once. You love some one else?"

He said it questioningly, but a warm light shone in the dark eyes raised to his.

"Yes," she answered bravely, sadly.

"And he?" Col. Rawlin asked eagerly.

"I do not know. He has never spoken," she sighed.

"Then he is not worthy of you," he cried passionately. "He does not love you. Grace, if that is all, if that is the shadow which has crept between us, I will crush it. I will teach you to love me, my darling."

She trembled violently at his emotion, and he drew her gently toward him.

"That is not all," she murmured more faintly, for his strong love had moved her strangely.

Col. Rawlin became impatient at what he considered a woman's caprice.

"What other reason have you for refusing my offer?" he inquired with some asperity.

Suddenly a new courage straightened her slight form, and she looked up and away from him with a glad, bright smile.

"There is my reason before you, Col.

Rawlin, my reason for hating you and loving him, yes, yes, ten thousand times better than I love my own life."

Wallace Rawlin stood before them in the early twilight, looking at his father with sad, accusing eyes.

"My son, — Wallace? Impossible?" gasped the colonel. But they evidently thought differently, for at his words Wallace held out his arms, and with a glad cry she took refuge within them.

There were a few kisses, and the broken words, —

"I cannot allow the sacrifice, my darling. It is too much, too much. I, a poor deformed wretch, and you, rich, beautiful, lovable, all that makes a woman angelic."

"Hush," said Grace, putting one small hand over his mouth, "save some of your golden opinions until after our wedding, dear."

And he did, as he is never yet tired of chanting the praises of his beautiful wife, who had not only learned to love him in his misfortune, but had glorified his darkened life by daring to tell him of it.

COMMITTING A FELONY.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

Laura Dorsheimer's brother Charley, and Laura Dorsheimer's lover, Ned Douglas, were talking together on the front piazza of the Dorsheimer residence, ten miles from town. Charley was doing most of the talking.

"Ned," he was saying, "I'm glad you've come back, for more reasons than one. I'm in a deuce of a pickle, and I depend upon you to get me out of it."

"Well, what now?" inquired the other.

"You know the little Folinsbee girl?"

"I should think I did! Knew her when her father was an army sutler instead of president of half a dozen banks. They are vulgar people. You'd better keep away from them."

"Well, but you see — your advice comes too late. I'm engaged to Sue."

"The deuce you are?"

"But I could n't help it. 'Pon my word, I was n't myself at all. It was the champagne, the other night at Ottarson's, that did it. And, then, she *does* look pretty when she wears blue; and the lights and the dancing and the moonlight — I tell you, Ned, you'd have done it yourself."

Ned gave a contemptuous grunt. "And what do you expect me to do in the matter? I can't take her off your hands very well, seeing that I'm engaged to another woman."

"Yes; but could n't you — could n't you — well, the fact is, Ned, you're a terrible fellow with the women. Laura used to be jealous as thunder of you at Newport. Why could n't you make love to Sue, and kind of cut me out, you know? Your engagement to Laura is n't announced yet. If she really thought you were in earnest she'd go back on me quick enough. She don't care a pin for me; all that she wants is position."

"And you expect me to deliberately win her affections and then throw her over, do you! May I ask what you take me for?"

"Pooh! It's no more than she would do with me. Besides, she has n't any affections."

"And just imagine too," Ned went on,

"how Laura would cut up about it, — seeing me making love to another girl! No, I thank you. Get yourself out of your own scrapes."

"But you might make up to her enough to get the letter."

"Letter! what letter?"

"Why, you see, she made me write her a letter of proposal. Said she would n't let me kiss her until I did. And I was *very* far gone between her and the champagne just then."

"Well, you *are* a noodle. I can't imagine how a girl like Laura came to have such an idiot for a brother."

"What's done is done," said poor Charley disconsolately, too much absorbed in his "pickle" to heed this rather severe language. At any rate, if you won't help me out of it, you will have the pleasure of meeting the Folinsbee soon, as your sister-in-law."

"By Jove! It is rough on all of us. I'll never speak to her, though. Can't she be bought off?"

"No; it is n't money she wants. Plenty already."

"If it was n't for that letter! She has n't any other hold on you, has she?"

"No."

"See that she don't get any more letters. There's one thing that we can do. I know a smart fellow who is a private detective. I'll set him on her. If he can find that letter you're all right. If not, then Heaven help you! I can't. Your only hope is to make such hot love to her as to disgust her beforehand. I'll see Crandall when I go to town. Good-night. I wish you a pleasant evening with your *fiancee*."

A fortnight later the matter was being talked over again between the two, in the same place.

"Is n't it time your detection accomplished something?" Charley asked complainingly.

"He has accomplished all that could be done. I saw him today. He throws up the case. He has not got the letter."

"He must be a smart detective."

"I am more than satisfied with what he has done. He sent a reliable woman into the Folinsbee family as waiting-maid. She could neither find the letter nor hear anything about it. Then he watched his chance when the old folks were in town, sent a sham telegram to the girls to come up at once, and went through the house himself, in the character of gas-fitter, during their absence. He says in all probability the old man carries the letter about on his own person. From something the waiting-maid overheard, it would seem that Mr. Folinsbee is afraid you may coax the letter away from Sue, and so he has taken charge of it. There is just one thing more to be done as a *dernier resort*. It is a desperate plan, but I've been thinking it over all the afternoon, and I think we ought to risk it."

"For Heaven sake, name it," Charley cried impatiently. "Anything but marrying that girl."

"Well, every Wednesday night old Folinsbee is down at the village bank at a Board meeting. He is fond of walking; and, as the weather is now, the chances are he'll come along the road tomorrow night about ten o'clock on foot and alone. Mr. Ottarson, you know, comes part way with him. But there is the Walnut Grove between here and Ottarson's. What do you say to you and I disguising ourselves as tramps, tackling the old man, — I fancy we two together can manage him, — tying him fast, and going through his pockets? If that letter is on his person, we'll find it. Then you can go back on the girl as soon as you please. I suppose she deserves it."

"Yes; and you may be sure that's just what I will do, just let me once get that letter back. Of course I'm with you. Tomorrow night, did you say?"

"Yes. There's plenty of time to arrange the thing. We shall have to take his money too, while we are about it. If we only took the letter he would suspect us at once; and he might make trouble for us even if he could n't prove anything. In the eyes of the law we shall be nothing less than highway robbers. The thing will be an out-and-out felony. Are you ready to risk half a dozen years in the state's prison?"

"Whew!" uttered Charley. "It is rather steep. But I might as well go to jail as marry the Folinsbee. Besides, we sha'n't get caught."

"I don't mean to, but there's no telling."

"Well, I am ready to risk it. But why should you run such a chance? Ned, you're a trump to think of doing it."

"Bosh! Do you think I want that woman for a sister-in-law any more than you want her for a wife?"

At nine o'clock the next evening Ned left Laura, and made his appearance in Charley's room. He found that young man pacing up and down impatiently, disguised past all recognition in a slouched hat and dilapidated suit of clothes.

"Come," cried he. "Why did n't you come before? We ought to be moving. I have an old suit of father's that will do for you."

Ned proceeded leisurely to array himself in the clothes that were lying on a chair close by.

"No hurry," he said coolly. "Don't for Heaven's sake get excited; you may spoil everything. You had better take a tumbler of brandy before we start. Here: give me the cork."

And he took it and held it in the flame of the gas, preparatory to blackening his face with it.

Finally, at half-past nine, they stole carefully down-stairs and out the back way, down past the stables into the woods, coming out after a while on the road below the house, and looking, in the shadowy starlight, as veritable a pair of tramps and scamps as could well be imagined.

It was a quarter of a mile farther down the road, in a dark grove lifting itself up on either side, that the proposed robbery was to be attempted. The spot was quickly reached, they secreted themselves in the bushes beside the road, and then for a long while — seemingly much longer than it really was — they awaited the appearance of their victim. At last, when their patience was well-nigh exhausted, and Charley had repeatedly protested that he might as well marry the Folinsbee girl as catch his death of rheumatism, footsteps were heard approaching. Charley was all excitement, and Ned had to grip his arm tight to quiet him and keep him back. But, after all, the steps were presently found to come from the wrong direction, and in a moment Ottarson's man came by. He was courting one of the servant-girls up at Mr. Dorsheimer's.

The man had gotten by them only a few rods, however, when they heard some one meet and speak to him. They recognized

the voice at once, and knew that this time their man was surely coming. Another moment, and they could discern old Folinsbee's stout figure against the background of the sky, advancing slowly with hands in pockets, deeply engrossed in some money problem or other. Douglas whispered to Charley to hold back until he himself gave the signal.

"Keep close to me," he said, and be all ready with the rope. I'll do all the talking myself. Don't you open your head. If you do, I'll shoot you."

Then there he was all at once, the father of the girl who was making all the trouble, right before them in the road.

Ned Douglas stepped forward, and planted himself directly in the old man's path. He certainly looked a terribly desperate fellow as he presented his revolver, and hissed in a low tone, —

"Hold! A single word above a whisper, and you are a dead man."

Mr. Folinsbee stood stock-still, more alarmed than he ever had been before in all his life.

He began to tremble in every limb.

"What do you want?" he gasped in a frightened whisper.

"Never you mind what we want. Put yer hands behind you. Do you *hear*? Here, Tom" (to Charley), "tie 'em tight, — the old knot, ye know."

Then quickly, without any resistance on his part, they bound him securely, and proceeded to search his pockets, the victim's eyes all the while rolling fearfully in his head.

"You won't find any money of any consequence," he assured them. "I never carry much. And as for my watch and chain" —

"Shut up!" growled Ned fiercely. "Here, Tom: go through those inside pockets. Papers is sometimes more valuable than money. Hollo! what's this in this 'ere pocket? Queer place to keep letters, in your inside vest-pocket. Must be important. I'll take charge of it, any way."

Ned had glanced at the letter, and discovered with secret joy that it was the one he sought.

"Oh, that's of no importance whatever,

only to myself. Only a personal matter, I assure" —

"Do you want me to maul yer?" brutally interrupted the taller ruffian. "It'll be healthy for you ter limit your conversation to speakin' when your spoken to durin' the rest of this intervoo."

But the "intervoo" was prolonged very little longer. The robbers had secured what they came for, and presently they sat Mr. Folinsbee on his feet again.

"Very sorry," gruffly remarked the spokesman of the two, "but the best of friends must part, ye know. 'We've concluded to let some one else ontie your hands. You live *that* way, I believe. Will give yer just two minutes to git out o' sight in. Now — forward, double-quick, *march!*'"

And the poor fellow sped away just in time to avoid the uplifted boot. He never stopped until he arrived, panting and breathless, at his own door, where the family were sitting on the porch. He related the story to them, enlarging on it in a manner that would have excited no small degree of astonishment and admiration in the robbers themselves could they have heard it. According to his account, there were eight of them.

"And the funnies part of it is," said the old gentleman in conclusion, "the cussed fools forgot to take my watch and chain, arter all. That is — that's the funniest part except one," he went on, looking, with crestfallen glance, at his youngest daughter. "The fact is, Sue, you'll have to git young Dorsheimer to write you another letter. They've took that one, blast 'em!"

But she never did get young Dorsheimer to write her another letter; and she was very much surprised, a while after this, when he asserted his complete independence one day, told her that they were not at all fitted for each other, and that the marriage was out of the question. In vain her tears, in vain her wrath, in vain her threats to produce the letter and sue him for breach of promise. He was rude enough to intimate that he did not care a continental for the letter; and, as for suing, he smiled grimly, and insisted that he had been *Sued* pretty thoroughly already.

DICK TODDLEMAN'S MASQUERADE.

BY N. P. DARLING.

It was the worst snow-storm of the season, and as it still continued, and blew furiously, promised to be the greatest within the memory of the oft-quoted oldest inhabitant.

Of course the railroads were all blocked up, but none quite so badly as the one upon which our hero, Mr. Richard Toodleman, had started for his home in Millikinville.

He had taken the express train for W—— at four o'clock that afternoon, and at ten o'clock that evening the train had come to a dead stop opposite the village of Umbagog, just at the entrance to a long, deep cut that was packed full of snow, and had got to be shoved out, as no engine could force its way through it.

As this would necessitate a delay of several hours, the majority of the passengers left the train and went to the hotel in the village, where they took supper, and those who were not in too great a hurry to reach their various destinations engaged rooms for the night.

Among the later was our hero, who, shortly after supper, bade the agreeable young widow, whose acquaintance he had made on the cars, — having occupied the same seat with her, — good-night, and retired to the apartment that had been assigned him.

Now, if the reader supposes, that our mu-

tual friend, Dick Toodleman, was in love with the charming widow, why, all I can say is, that the reader don't know anything about Mr. Toodleman or his affairs; for the fact is, our hero was terribly in love with another woman.

Her name was Adelaide Tirrell, and she lived in Millikinville. She was the only daughter of her father, who, by the way, was a widower and rich, — oh! so rich!

Miss Tirrell was extravagantly fond of our Dick. She lavished her young affections upon him as freely as those old Greeks and Trojans used to pour their wine around in their libations to the gods.

This was as it should be. I like to see a young woman affectionate; but Mr. Tirrell was n't of my way of thinking. He didn't love Dick Toodleman any to speak of, and he objected very strongly to his daughter entwining her affections around the image of any young man who did n't suit him. That was the way with old Mr. Tirrell; and a very bad way it was I think, don't you, my lovely reader?

Perhaps you did n't know that Dick was a lawyer? Well, he was, and a first-rate lawyer too, although he had n't a great many clients. He was too young to have a very extended reputation established, and also

too young to have made a very great fortune; and it was principally on account of his lack of fortune that Mr. Tirrell so strongly objected to him for a son-in-law.

Dick had been living in Millikinville about five years at this time, and for the last three years he had been entirely devoted to the pretty Adelaide.

Her father did n't pay much attention to Dick's frequent visits to his house at first, and when he did begin to suspect what the young fellow was up to it was too late. She loved him; and you know, ma'am, that when a young woman does get to loving a fellow, one might as well try to quench fire with kerosene as to smother her love by any contrivance yet invented.

But Mr. Tirrell held a very different opinion in regard to these matters. He tried the old way. He went to Mr. Toodleman and told him that his daughter was not for him.

"No. Richard Toodleman," said he, "you can't take any stock in this family, not if I know myself; and consequently you will oblige me by discontinuing your visits to my house. When I do want you, I'll send for you." And with that, the old gentleman bustled out of the office, and went home to give his daughter a lecture upon the same subject.

The lovers met clandestinely after that, as lovers generally do under such circumstances; and although they saw no possibility of the paternal Tirrell relenting, they continued to love each other as fondly as ever, and lived on the hope of something turning up to their advantage.

As to the charming young widow (she had introduced herself as Mrs. Gildad, from New York City) whom Dick had encountered in his return from W—, where he had been attending court, the only part she plays in this story was played that night at the Umbagog House, while our hero was reposing in the arms of Morpheus, and dreaming of the fair Adelaide.

Mrs. Gildad had told Dick that she was very anxious to reach her journey's end; and so, instead of taking a room at the hotel, she remained in the public parlor with a number of the other passengers, until the train was once more ready to go on, when she departed, and our hero never saw her again.

I said that Mrs. Gildad remained in the hotel parlor; but she must have absented herself from that apartment for a short time

during the night, for when Mr. Toodleman arose the next morning, perhaps you can imagine his surprise, when, instead of finding his clothes upon the chair where he had left them, he found a full suit of female attire, which he recognized at once as the property of the charming Mrs. Gildad.

Our hero took it all in at a glance. He knew now why that lady had been so anxious to go on. She was evidently running away from the officers of the law, and fearing that the telegraph might warn the police at the other end of the route, she had taken this means of disguising herself.

Mr. Toodleman looked at the garments, and asked himself what he should do. His first thought was to ring the bell, call up the landlord, explain the situation, and send out for a new suit of clothes; but he objected very much to being looked upon in the light of a victim. Then he did n't want the affair to get into the papers, for then his legal friends would be sure and hear of it, and there would be no end of jokes at his expense. And then, again, his beloved Adelaide would surely learn of it.

"No, no, it won't do," he said to himself. "I would n't have Adelaide know of this for the world; and her father—oh! would n't it be nuts to him! With such a foundation, how easily the old gentleman could concoct a story, or at least give his opinion regarding the real facts in the case, in such a way as to ruin my character in her eyes forever. No, it won't do."

Mr. Toodleman sighed, surveyed himself in the mirror for one moment, as if to take a farewell look at his mother's only son, and then reluctantly began to array himself in Mrs. Gildad's apparel.

For a wonder that lady's gray traveling dress fitted him remarkably well; but that was easily accounted for by the fact that she had probably taken his clothes in preference to those of any other guest because they fitted her.

"I don't look bad," cried Dick, once more surveying himself in the glass after dressing.

"Luckily, like Dickens's Fascination Fledgeby, my face is as smooth as a girl's; and my hair—why, I can part it in the middle just so," suiting the action to the words, "with a little quirl-up what-d'ye-call-um on each side, and who the deuce would ever suspect that this was Richard Toodleman? Why, even Adelaide would n't know me."

In truth, our Dick did make a remarkably handsome woman; and it was really a wonder that he did not, like Narcissus, fall in love with his own image reflected in the mirror.

Fortunately, his pocket-book and watch, which he had placed under his pillow before retiring, had not been molested, as Mrs. Gildad had probably been too anxious to secure a perfect disguise to run any further risk than was necessary to obtain that alone.

And now Dick, having completed his toilet, rang the bell and called for the clerk.

The clerk came, and Dick asked for his bill, and expressed a wish that a carriage might be called to convey him to the depot.

"All right," said Mr. Snodgrass, although he didn't look as if he thought it was all right by any means; for you see he was positively sure that he had booked a gentleman for that room the night before, and how the deuce it happened that he found a woman there was a question that he could n't answer to his satisfaction at all.

"All right," repeated the clerk. "I suppose you'll have breakfast before you go, ma'am?"

"No, I have hardly time to reach the train now," repeated Dick in the softest voice he could assume. "My bill, if you please."

"Ah, yes, your name is" —

"Mrs. Richard Toodleman."

"Oh, I remember."

But he did n't; and the name only confused him the more, for it was only Richard Toodleman on the book, and he could have sworn, five minutes before, that he had seen a gentleman write it.

After another pause, in which he was vainly trying to clear his puzzled brain, he retired in great bewilderment, knocking over two chairs in his exit, while attempting to keep his eyes on Dick's face and get out of the room by the sense of feeling alone.

But the clerk was as much puzzled as ever; when, after paying his bill, our hero left the house for the railroad station; and all that forenoon he was asking himself how it was possible that he could put a gentleman into a room at night, and find no one but a lady there in the morning.

"Dang it! this thing is n't all right," mused Mr. Snodgrass. "I don't like the looks of it. There's a mystery about this affair, and I must get to the bottom of it."

But, meantime, Mr. Toodleman had

reached the station, got aboard the cars, and was speeding toward Millikinville.

"Is this seat engaged, ma'am?"

Dick looked up to find a corpulent, red-faced, white-headed old gentleman smiling down at him in a paternally affectionate way, who, having attracted his attention, repeated the question.

"No, sir, I am traveling alone," answered Dick, at the same time remarking to himself in the language of Jennie Wren, "I know your tricks and your manners."

The corpulent gentleman crowded down into the seat, in such a way as to face his companion, remarking, as he did so, upon the severity of the late storm.

"Yes, I was detained at Umbagog last night on account of it," said Dick.

"Ah, indeed! I remained at W——, fearing that I should not be able to reach home before today, even if I made the attempt. Are you traveling far?"

"No, sir."

"Mighty reserved," thought the old gentleman, "but decidedly good-looking."

"What an old fool!" thought Dick, "I believe he's going to make love to me;" and he jammed his handkerchief into his mouth for fear of laughing in the old boy's face.

"Ahem! I — it strikes me, ma'am, that I've met you somewhere before," remarked the corpulent gentleman, with one of his most affectionate smiles.

"And your face looks very familiar to me," returned Dick.

"There's a roguish twinkle in her eyes, but, oh! how modestly she blushes," thought the old gentleman, as he handed his card to our hero.

Dick read the card. "I've heard of you very often, sir."

"Yes, I am pretty well known in this vicinity," returned the old gentleman, swelling up like the frog in the fable. "And your name, ma'am? — strange, I can't think of it. I'm sure we've met before, for I remember your face perfectly well. In truth, it is altogether too beautiful to be easily forgotten."

Dick blushed modestly, and came very near swallowing his handkerchief in attempting to smother a snicker.

"Yes, we have met before, sir."

"Ah! I knew we had, and your image was indelibly impressed upon my memory. And pray what may I call you?"

"Lulu," whispered Dick.

"What a sweet name! but none too sweet for its beautiful owner."

"I'm afraid you flatter me."

"Oh, no, upon my honor, Lulu. Excuse me for calling you by your christian-name, for I don't know your surname."

"It is Ferguson. You don't think that very sweet?"

"Perhaps not; but thanks to your sex and your beauty you could easily change it," murmured the old gentleman, as he took Dick's hand in his, and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"O sir! you should n't do that," whispered Mr. Toodleman, covering his face with one hand to conceal his blushes.

"How coy she is!" thought the old gentleman. "I'd give a ten-dollar bill for one kiss."

Just then the train passed under a bridge, and this aged admirer of female beauty matched a kiss.

Dick gave a little scream.

"Hush! you'll attract attention, my dear."

"I hope your intentions are honorable, sir," whispered Dick.

"Can you doubt it?"

"But you men are so wicked. I hope you are not a married man."

"I am a widower, Lulu— Excuse me, but let me call you so: I am contemplating matrimony."

"Then you'll have to ask my pa."

"Oh, Ferguson?"

"Mr. Ferguson."

"Oh, yes, to be sure. Where did you say you resided?"

Dick was writing rapidly on the back of one of his business cards, and the train was just stopping at the Millikinville station.

"I must leave you here, sir," said Dick, rising.

"Eh? you stop here! Why, so do I. But—but, why, you don't live here?"

"Yes. Good-by, sir. Here is my card, Mr. Tirrell. When you want another kiss, please call at my office."

The next moment Dick stepped out on to the platform, while the corpulent gentleman sank back into his seat with a groan, with his small black eyes fixed upon Richard Toodleman's card.

"Done for!" he muttered.

Then he turned the card over, and read as follows:—

"If you want to keep this little affair to ourselves, — particularly the kissing, — you had better let me hear from you as soon as possible. DICK."

The stout gentleman tore the card into shreds, and went tearing out of the car like a mad man, muttering curses loud and deep as he hurried along toward his office.

Half an hour later, our hero, once more in his proper habiliments, received the following note from the hands of Mr. Tirrell's office-boy.

"MR. RICHARD TOODLEMAN: *Dear Sir*, — If you want my daughter for a wife, please take her at once. As I am suddenly called to the West upon business of importance, I shall probably not be able to attend the wedding; but don't defer it on my account. Marry her at once, be happy, and keep your mouth shut. TIRRELL."

That was enough for Mr. Toodleman. He spent that evening with his dear Adelaide, who had been informed by her father that the blockade was removed, and that her lover might sail in to port and carry off the prize at his leisure.

"But how funny," said she, "that father should relent."

"Not at all, my dear," replied Dick.

And so they were married in a quiet manner during Mr. Tirrell's absence; and the happiest couple I know of today in all Millikinville, is Dick Toodleman and his handsome wife.

As for Mr. Tirrell, though still a great admirer of the female sex, he is very careful how he makes love to pretty young ladies on the cars; but he is still on the look-out for a young and handsome wife.

Mrs. Gildad, who, as Dick afterward learned, was a noted confidence woman when the police were exceedingly anxious to interview, managed to escape the lynx-eyed officers of the law, much to the chagrin of Mr. Snodgrass, who blamed himself very much for not acting upon his suspicions, and having her arrested, on the morning after the great storm.

ESTHER.

BY MISS ELLIS CLARE.

CHAPTER I.

It was all very still out-of-doors. The snow had come down in the night and covered the broad fields, making a great silence everywhere.

It was Sunday, — early morning. The bells had not begun to chime from the dark church-tower. No one was astir in the little red-roofed houses of the village.

Only one line of footsteps broke the smoothness of the snow along the wide turnpike road. Small footprints they were. They marked the white surface in a long, unbroken line from the door of the great gabled house about a mile from the village to a grave close by the western door of the church. It was a new grave; but the snow had covered the grassless sods. The grave was not forgotten yet. A wreath of fresh flowers was laid upon it, and a weeping girl stood close beside it, *thinking all joy and brightness had gone out of her life when the soul passed from the worn body of her who lay coffined beneath the snow.*

The Vicarage was close to the churchyard. It was a low house, with a veranda in front, and a beautiful garden, bounded by the river. The Vicar's study was a modern addition to the building. It was built on the churchyard side of the house, and had a deep bay-window that filled one end of the room. The Vicar was fond of sitting in that window. He always wrote his sermons there. It was a fitting spot for such work. Being up-stairs — the breakfast-room was below — one could look across the churchyard wall, over the green graves. And east and west there were the gently undulating fields, parted from each other by richly wooded hedgerows, or by the breadth of the placid river; while close at hand was the little village, with its music of human voices or human labor.

The Vicar liked the snow. He rose early, to enjoy the white world outside his study window. The footsteps caught his eyes, as they wandered over the sparkling whiteness, and he followed them up till he saw the flowers on the grave, and the little black

figure, half hidden by the arch of the great door. His face changed slightly. It was a calm face, that showed little of the workings of the soul within; but it colored with some deep feeling, and tears were in his eyes, as he ran quickly down the shallow stairway and opened the breakfast-room door.

The apartment was a picture of brightness and comfort. The table was laid for breakfast for two, and the servant was just placing the toast and eggs. A young lady, very graceful and pretty, and dressed in a dark linsey, was standing by the fireplace, with her foot on the fender, reading. It was to her the Vicar spoke.

"Nannie, just have another cup laid; I am going to bring Esther Prideaux in to breakfast."

"Why, Wilfred!"

But he was gone. A little gate led from the Vicarage garden into the churchyard. He passed through this, and then it was hardly a dozen steps to the western door.

"Esther!"

She had not heard his step, and she looked up with a start.

"How cold you are!" he said, taking her hand. "Come: I am going to take you in to breakfast."

Her look touched him to the heart, — it was so hopeless in its sorrow. Her eyes rested on his face for a moment, and then were directed toward the snowy grave.

"She does n't feel the cold?" she said almost questioningly, with a shudder in her voice.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it" — you know the rest," returned the Vicar gently.

She made no answer, not even by a look; and he took her hand again.

"Come, Miss Esther."

He had no resistance to deal with. She went with him at once. Nannie waited at the door, her amazement tempered by sympathy.

"My poor little darling!" she exclaimed, putting her arms round Esther, and drawing her to the fire. "You are almost frozen!"

She seated her in the easy-chair, and with

quick hands drew off her boots, while the Vicar poured out a cup of coffee, and brought it to his little guest.

"I shall send William to the Lindens," he remarked, as he watched her drink it. "I think we deserve to have you for today. When do you go to London?"

"On Tuesday." The answer was very low, and spoken with a quiver of the lips that told of much pain behind the word.

The Vicar looked gravely into the fire, and then back at Esther's pale little face.

"So soon!" exclaimed Nannie, who was still kneeling on the rug. "And when shall we see you again, dear?"

The question broke up Esther's calmness.

"Never!" she sobbed out, resting her head upon Nannie's short brown curls. "Aunt is going to let the Lindens, and we are never coming back again."

"I should like you to define that dreadful word 'never,'" remarked the Vicar quietly, though his lips trembled. "How many years does it mean, little Esther?"

She was too accustomed to answer him at once to hesitate now. She had been his pupil for a year or two, and the old habit of obedience was still strong upon her.

"Four," she answered, with a sort of a gasp, as though the length of the years could not be measured in her mind.

"You will be of age then," said Nannie, with a sort of triumph in her tone. "You will come back to us then, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" sobbed Esther. "I will never leave my dear home then, — never again!"

"That word seems a great favorite with you," said the Vicar, smiling at her, though his smile was troubled. "Suppose we leave the future. It is in good hands."

He brought her breakfast to the fireside, and they petted and soothed her, till some of its usual brightness came back to the little white face.

The Vicar had sent to the Lindens to say that Esther would remain for the day; but just before church-time a handsome carriage drove up to the Vicarage gates. Mrs. Prideaux presented her compliments to Mr. Clare, and she wished Miss Prideaux to return home at once.

The Vicar received the message, and went back to Esther.

"You must go home, dear."

"I am going to stay," said Esther, without stirring from her seat. "The carriage

may go away. Aunt has no right to send for me."

"My dear, you must go," answered the Vicar gently. "I have taught you many lessons, Esther. Let this be the last, — the lesson of obedience."

She started up, and came across the rug to his side.

"Not the last," she cried. "I could not bear to think that! When I am of age I will come back, and you will teach me again. Don't forget me, Mr. Clare; remember your pupil a little."

"I promise not to forget you," he answered, taking both her hands. "Heaven bless you, Esther, and give you peace. Take comfort in your life, my dear. There will be new friends in it soon."

"Never like the old! Never like you?" was the passionate answer.

The Vicar's sister came in then, indignant and pained at the summons for Esther. But Mr. Clare checked her hasty remonstrances.

"Esther must go, my dear," he said.

Nannie was silent; but she kissed and cried over Esther with the impulsive affection which some natures give so freely. Esther bore her caresses without repulse, but she was keen-hearted enough to value more the Vicar's lingering clasp of her hand; and it was his face she looked at as she bent forward as the carriage whirled her away.

He was standing on the steps, looking after her; even after the carriage had turned the corner of the road he stood there. His sister called to him impatiently at last.

"Do come in, Wilfred. The draught is horrible, and it is so bad for your throat."

He closed the door, making some light reply to his sister, and went back to the study.

The bells were ringing merrily now, and people were flocking up the church path. It was nearly time for the Vicar to go, but his thoughts held him. He would have done with them, if he could, before beginning the sacred work of the day.

He had been appointed Vicar of Charleworth four years before, and a strong friendship had soon sprung up between him and Mrs. Prideaux, the lady of the Manor. She was a great invalid, and it pleased her that Esther, her only child, should have more cheerful society. And Esther liked to be at the Vicarage with the Vicar and

his sister; and the Vicar helped her in her studies when the governess went away, and a bright, pleasant life had gone on that seemed as if it might last forever.

One sad heart felt the end coming in the dreary autumn days. Mrs. Prideaux loved life for Esther's sake, and she was not sure of it for an hour, knew it could not be hers for long. Her husband had left her sole guardian of Esther; but, at her death, if Esther was still unmarried, her uncle was to have the charge of her.

This was a sore trouble to Mrs. Prideaux, for her husband's brother and his wife were people she disliked extremely. It was natural, as she meditated on her darling's future, and shrank from giving her to coarse, unloving hands that would not shield or guard her, that she should think of Mr. Clare. With him she could trust Esther, sure of her being sheltered and watched over as she had always been.

"Marry her before I die, Wilfred," she said to him one day, "and I shall not have a care left. Esther loves you; I am sure she does."

That was what the Vicar thought of, as he paced his study once or twice, on that Sunday morning. His answer to the dying woman had been a noble and manly one. He had begged her to leave her child to Heaven, and be content that her future was well cared for. Esther was so young, she could not know her own heart, he had wisely said; and yet his heart ached on this day with keen regret. For he loved the child dearly; as deeply as such a calm nature as his could love anything earthly; and for a few moments he wished he had chosen the bright path, and made his worldly future sure. And poor little Esther—he would have made her so happy. His very unselfishness made his trouble all the worse to bear.

"Wilfred! Wilfred!" called his sister.

He hurried down-stairs, with a prayer upon his lips for help; and help came to him in the deep, sweet consciousness, that, whatever the end would be, he had done right.

CHAPTER II.

What an untidy room it was! The governess looked round it in dismay, as she stood on the threshold with a lamp in her hand. The children had been left alone for

an hour, while she helped their elder sisters to finish some mourning-dresses, and the little rebels had dragged every book on to the floor, under the pretence of dusting the shelves, and rolled the strip of carpet into one corner, in company with the table and the globes.

Fred, "the pickle," was on his knees before the blazing fire, brushing the fender with a black-lead brush, requisitioned from the kitchen. Miss Dora, with her dress tucked up, and a handkerchief over her bright curls, was quarreling with her younger sister for the broom. The contest had just come to the stage of muscular force when Miss Hatton appeared on the scene. There was another girl in the room, seated cozily in the corner by the fire, a book propped on her knees, reading hard, with her hands tight over her ears. It was to her Miss Hatton spoke first.

"Can't you try to keep a little more order, Ellen, instead of mooning there over that silly poetry? This room is simply disgraceful."

"You can't expect them to obey me, when they won't obey you," was the answer, in a sulky manner.

Miss Hatton made no answer, but turned to the combatants, who had proclaimed an armistice for a moment, and stood regarding her under their sullen brows.

"Dora, Marion, I must insist on more ladylike behaviour. Your cousin will be shocked. And just look at the room! Ellen, get up this moment, and put it tidy."

"You should n't have come in so soon," remarked Fred, who was still brushing away with cheerful energy. "We should have made it tidy soon."

"Indeed!" returned Miss Hatton, putting the lamp upon the table, and looking at Ellen.

She rose slowly from her corner, and commenced to drag the things into their proper places. Dora and Marion never attempted to help. They had drawn aside together, murmuring sullenly against Miss Hatton. When the governess found that her commands were obeyed by Ellen, she turned to Fred, who took not the slightest notice of her, and commenced to whistle "Yankee Doodle," as he polished the well-worn steel.

"Do you hear what I say, sir? Get up at once, and go and wash your face and hands. They are perfectly black."

"Queen Anne's dead," remarked Fred coolly, continuing his whistle after this polite reply.

The fender was finished to his liking by this time, however; and he got up from off his knees, and playfully aimed the brush at Miss Hatton.

"Don't be waxy, old woman! I'll be up in A 1 style to meet our wonderful cousin. I'm going to help Ellen a bit."

He marched off to the other end of the room, where the books had been heaped. Ellen, in a breathless, passionate way, was picking them up and piling them upon the shelves. She turned, as the boy came near, and tried to hide her face; but he caught hold of her short, straggling hair and turned her forcibly round to meet his sympathizing look. The girl's handsome dark eyes were flashing with suppressed anger. Her whole face was livid with the strong emotion that had no relief in words. The boy had seen her with such a look once or twice before, — once, when Dora had jeered at her about her father, and she had almost killed her with a blow. Fred was frightened, and helped her to put up the books in silence, though once or twice he touched her hand softly, with the gesture of a loving brother.

Miss Hatton was putting before the sisters the advisability of dressing for tea.

"Your inamma wishes your Cousin Esther to have tea here. As she is to be one of the school-room party, she may as well begin at once."

"I don't see who Cousin Esther is, that we need dress for her," returned Marion, moving off, however, after Dora, who was always ready to adorn her fair little person.

By this time the room had resumed its usual appearance. A blank dreary room it was at the best of times, tintless and comfortless, — a long, narrow room, with three uncurtained windows on one side, looking out from a dizzy height on a London street. It was Miss Hatton's home, poor soul, and she was to be forgiven any little failure of temper.

Fred walked off to restore his complexion to something like its proper color, and the governess was left alone with her eldest pupil. Ellen had finished the books, and gone back to the fireplace, — but not to read. She placed her elbows upon the high guard, and rested her head upon her hands, looking gloomily into the fire.

Miss Hatton had gone to look after her

rebellious pupils, and Ellen was alone, when the school-room door opened hastily to admit Mrs. Prideaux and the expected visitor. Ellen had never seen any one so fair and gentle-looking as the young girl who entered in deep mourning, and her desolate heart went out to Esther at once.

Mrs. Prideaux's introduction was characteristic.

"This is Ellen, my dear. In a day or two she is going away to learn to become a useful member of society."

"I am very glad," returned Ellen defiantly.

Esther kissed her.

"Are you going to school then?" she said. "I am sorry, dear. We should be friends."

Mrs. Prideaux had turned to the door. Footsteps dear to her were coming up the stairs, — her darling's, her idol's, — handsome Percy. He was the son of her first marriage in the far-off time, when Mrs. Prideaux was young, and she loved him best of all. He came in, a smiling, beautiful lad, in the first bloom of manhood.

He and Esther clasped hands, and looked into each other's eyes, she reading kindly sympathy in his, he seeing beauty and gentleness in hers. Ellen was forgotten, and she went away to her lonely room, to half break her heart, wishing for gentle ways and soft blue eyes like Esther's, so that she too might be loved.

Esther, in the kindly feeling sorrow gives, made a good deal of Ellen for the first few days, till the bleak morning when the lonely girl started on her journey to the school in North Wales, where she was to be trained for a governess. Esther kissed her good-by, and gave her a pretty gold locket with her likeness in it, and promised to write to her often.

Promises are easily given, and Esther really meant hers at the time. But the days went on, and her sorrow grew lighter day by day, as a new joy came into her life. Mrs. Prideaux had hoped and planned; but she had never expected such speedy fulfillment of her hopes. She was the happiest on that summer evening when Percy came to tell her that Esther had promised to be his wife.

"When you have taken your degree, my darling," the mother said, when he spoke of marriage. "O Percy, this is the happiest moment of my life!"

They all went to Scotland for the summer. Fred wanted Esther to ask for Ellen to be allowed to come with them; but Esther had so much to think of that she forgot Fred's request, and Ellen never came home. Nobody thought of her but Fred, — she was dropped out of the family life. It would have been just the same if she had been miserable; but Mrs. Prideaux had unwittingly found a tender home for Ellen, and a mother's care, when she placed her with Mrs. Forsyth. While Percy and Esther were in the dream of first love, Ellen, in the pretty house among the Welsh mountains, was earning a child's place in Mrs. Forsyth's heart.

Between Ellen and the schoolmistress a deep and strong affection sprang up, and Mrs. Forsyth's kindly influence sweetened and made beautiful the ardent nature of the girl. Llandinwair air and sunshine, and the regular life, and the tender motherly care rounded Ellen's cheeks and lit her eyes with light and her lips with smiles.

And the years went on.

CHAPTER III.

Three years is a long time to look forward to; but how quickly it passes when no great sorrow comes to lengthen moments of pain!

For Esther the three years were as a beautiful summer day, a day in June, when none of the flowers are dead and no presage of winter tempest and decay comes from earth and sky.

The third spring found all the family at the Lindens. Esther's marriage had been fixed for the autumn before; but it was postponed because of the illness of Mr. Prideaux. He died at Christmas, very little missed or sorrowed for. The wedding was then fixed for May; and when the red dawn of the morning of the year was on the trees, and the first primroses bloomed under the ruddy boughs, the Prideaux family came down to Esther's home.

Mr. Clare felt keenly that he was allowed to hear of their arrival only from the gossip of the village. Esther's correspondence with the Vicar had dropped, — old friends had little chance to be remembered in the first flush of her new happiness. Yet Esther never meant to be unkind; natures like hers can do the cruellest things and

never realize the pain they give. She had not forgotten Mr. Clare; and in any trouble her thoughts would have gone back to him as a bird to its mother's nest. But she did not need him now.

Mr. Clare accepted his position calmly; still it was hard at first, — hard to meet Esther after those years of parting, and have no words with her but those that the merest acquaintance could have shared. Esther cared more to talk to Nannie than with her brother; for Nannie too was engaged, and would be married in the summer. So the two girls had long talks in the Vicarage drawing-room, while Percy walked up and down the garden with the Vicar, talking and arguing over the scientific problems of the day.

Percy, since leaving college, had been proceeding with his studies. Women's talk tired him, though he did not confess it, even to himself; and it was a relief to get away from the drawing-room circle and the dreary platitudes of his women-folk, to have an hour's "grind" at mathematics, or to read the last new thing from scientific circles. He tried now and then to interest Esther in his work, but he might as well have talked to a butterfly of the theory of evolution and the constancy of natural law.

"Now, if you are going to be wise, I shall run away," Esther would say, putting her hands over her ears, and looking bewitching in her petulance. "I never could understand words of more than three syllables."

So Percy gave up the attempt, and walked placidly by his lady-love under the deepening shadows of the lindens, trying to feel intensely happy, but all the time being rather bored.

He and the Vicar became great friends. Esther was busy about her *trousseau*, and deep in consultation with Mrs. Prideaux and the dressmaker for a good deal of the day. So Percy was glad to go down to the Vicarage and talk to Mr. Clare.

So the days slipped by.

It was the middle of April. Percy had hardly noticed how the days were passing, but the rest of the month was to be the crisis of his life. A great deal of discussion had been going on between the ladies over their fancy-work all day; Percy, leaning back on the sofa, with the "Quarterly" in his hand, had a dim idea that something

was being decided about that uncomfortable cousin whom Fred was so desperately fond of.

"What was mother saying about Ellen?" he asked, as he walked with Esther in the garden.

"Oh, Miss Hatton is wanted somewhere or other! Her brother is dying, I believe. Fancy Miss Hatton with a brother and natural affections! But she is going, and auntie has decided upon sending for Ellen to take charge of the children while she is away."

"Fred will be delighted," was Percy's only remark on the subject.

Two or three days afterward, Mrs. Prideaux and her daughters and Esther had driven to the next town on a shopping expedition. Percy went down to the Vicarage; but Mr. Clare had gone on Parish business to the village, about a couple of miles from the Lindens, where a railway-station had lately been built. Percy, for want of something to do, walked on along the level turnpike-road, hoping to meet the Vicar. It was a warm day, and the road was slightly dusty, but the sweet-smelling hedges were bright with flowers, and a fresh breeze blew across the ploughed fields.

About a mile along the road, a gate in the hedge revealed a pathway, green with early grass, between two high banks of short soft moss. The banks at the top were crowned by some stately trees, and the shadows of the young leaves fell cool and pleasant upon the footpath below. Percy was glad to leave the dusty road, to have the grass beneath his feet and the arching boughs above him. He walked on, whistling softly to himself, and enjoying the coolness and the pleasant silence.

The lane descended slowly toward the village, with many devious turnings, so that one could see only a few steps in advance; and Percy suddenly came to a stile leading to a footpath across some fields. A tall, girlish figure was leaning over the stile, turned from Percy. He had time to notice the pretty quaintness of the simple dress, and the exquisite grace of the girl's drooping attitude, before she took her arms from off the bar and stepped back to let him pass. She glanced at him carelessly in doing so, and Percy saw, as their eyes met, how her expression changed and her face colored.

"You don't know me, Percy? I am your cousin Ellen!"

"Really!" He clasped her hand.

"Did n't my mother know? Why did n't somebody meet you?"

"Oh, I don't know! It does n't matter. But I shall be glad if you will show me my way. This is all strange ground."

Percy could not realize that this was Ellen, this beautiful girl.

"And you are happy at — at — that place?"

A curious look passed over Ellen's face.

"Yes; I am very happy at that place. I hope Miss Hatton's relative will soon recover."

Percy hoped differently. He felt that it would be very sweet to have Ellen in the house.

They walked back, talking a great deal. Percy found out that Ellen knew some college friends of his, who had gone down for a reading-party to Wales during the summer before. Ellen talked of them quite frankly, though her color came and went, as Percy went on to speak of one of the party who had taken very high honors.

"And you knew Forbes?"

"A little. He is Mrs. Forsyth's cousin. He did well?"

"I should think so! Forbes is one of the few who will be our leaders in the future. He was a great favorite at college."

Ellen did not answer. A close observer would have seen, in her trembling lips and the look of her dark eyes, the evidence of some strong emotion, but Percy never noticed it.

CHAPTER IV.

Esther found it convenient to accept Ellen's declaration that she was very happy and contented in the school-room. Esther was so busy and so happy that no time was left to make others happier. Ellen was left pretty much alone by the women-folk. Mrs. Prideaux went into the school-room once or twice a day to lecture and admonish, and the elder girls never lost an opportunity of making Ellen feel her position; but, for the greater part of the bright spring days, the young governess was left alone with her pupils, except for Percy's frequent visits.

He was a great deal in the school-room. He soon found that Ellen could appreciate his pursuits, and it became a usual thing

for him to bring his books, and talk to her about them. Ellen could converse well, and they had many an argument on the current topics of the day.

Percy was not given to analyze the causes that made a thing pleasant to him. Unconsciously his thoughts took a new color. He had no idea of being disloyal to Esther; he would have pronounced it an impossibility to love any other woman than the one he intended to make his wife in a month; but feelings are above rule. Before a fortnight of the month had passed Percy loved Ellen as he had never loved Esther, as he never could love her. It was accident that showed him the true state of his feelings. Fred was come home. He was a sailor now, and as fond of Ellen as ever. Percy found his talks with his cousin an impossibility, now that Fred was always in the school-room.

"You care more for Fred than for me," he said to Ellen bitterly.

"I care more for Fred than for anybody else, — you know I do," she returned, meeting the glance of his angry, passionate eyes.

"More than anybody else in the world? Really, Ellen?"

She colored so deeply that it was not hard to guess that there was somebody dearer still.

"Is there 'one other'?" he said, in the breathless tone of intense emotion.

They were standing at the school-room window. It was open, and Percy, as he asked the question, crushed with his hot hands the vine-leaves that clung round the sill.

"The poor little leaves!" said Ellen, to whom Percy's state of mind was perfectly unknown. She put her hand playfully upon his, to keep him from destroying the pretty green things.

The slight touch went through him like fire. He forgot everything in one mad impulse, and caught both her hands and drew her closely to him.

"Ellen, Ellen, I love you!"

He would have gone on recklessly and passionately, had not the expression of Ellen's face stopped and chilled him. Contempt, disdainful pity, awful surprise, — he could see them all. He dropped her hands, and covered his face with his own.

"It is true. Heaven forgive me, I could n't help it, Ellen! Why did you come here?"

"Hush!" she said, in an imperative, almost contemptuous tone. "You are not yourself today, Cousin Percy. You are a good, true man, and you will marry Esther in a fortnight, — dear little Esther!"

"Do you wish to drive me mad?" he asked passionately. "Of course I shall marry her. But I love you. Don't look at me like that, Cousin Ellen. Was it my fault? Our feelings are not our own to control."

"Our words are," she said coldly.

"If you knew what love meant, you would feel for me," he returned. "But you don't; you have no pity."

She looked up bravely into his face.

"Cousin Percy, I do know what love means. Some one I knew once used to like to talk with me. He liked me a little, but I loved him dearly, — I always shall. Still it does n't prevent my being happy."

Fred's gay step on the stairs interrupted them. Ellen went to the table and took up her work, and Percy stood with his back to the room, looking out of the window. Fred had been into the town with his sisters.

"I have brought you your books, Nellie. Do you know, I met a friend of yours in the shop as I was getting them?"

"Did you? Who was it?"

"A fine-looking fellow. He was with a party of jolly-looking girls. The *matel* knows them, and they were all talking together, while I asked for your books. The tall unknown was looking over some volumes close beside me. I said the books were for Miss Chandos, but the man pulled down two editions of Horace, and I did n't know which to take. While I was hesitating, the man at my side remarked in the coolest way, 'I beg your pardon, but Miss Chandos uses this edition,' taking up one of them. I gazed at him in mute astonishment, and he added, with the jolliest of smiles, 'Miss Chandos and I are old friends. Will you tell her Arthur Forbes chose her Horace?'"

Ellen took up the book, coloring painfully.

"Yes, this is the right one. Thank you, Fred."

CHAPTER V.

"Suppose we all go over to see this grand cricket-match tomorrow," remarked Mrs. Prideaux at dessert that evening. "The

Davenants were telling me about it today. It will be a good affair. You will see some of your college friends there, Percy."

"Snail IP?" he remarked carelessly. "I can't say I feel intensely delighted at the idea."

"Some of the eleven are staying with the Davenants," said Esther.

"What a fine-looking fellow that was with them!"

Fred smiled to himself over his walnuts.

"He is the captain of the eleven," remarked his eldest sister. "Mary Davenant told me that he has just succeeded to a handsome fortune."

"I should like to go tomorrow," said Esther. "A cricket-match is great fun."

"Can't Ellen go, *mater*?" asked Fred, who never lost a chance of pleading the cause of his favorite, and had a special reason for wishing Ellen to go to a cricket-match.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Prideaux sharply.

"I don't see why she should n't," remarked Fred stoutly. "Do let her go!"

"Yes, please let her go," said Esther, who was given to compunction of conscience on Ellen's account.

Mrs. Prideaux rarely resisted any appeal of Esther's; so she said graciously enough, —

"Well, if Ellen cares to go; but I hope she has too much sense to wish to mingle in scenes quite unfitted to her lot in life."

But Ellen did not prove worthy of Mrs. Prideaux's good opinion. She accepted the ungracious invitation at once, and joined the party in the hall next morning, dressed very quietly, but with exquisite taste. Mrs. Prideaux made a rule of ignoring her niece's existence on all public occasions; but Esther greeted her with a pleasant smile, and Fred rushed up with a knot of pink ribbons.

"Ellen, wear the same colors that I do. I chose them because I knew they would suit you," he added in a whisper.

"A reason worthy of you," said Ellen, laughing. "But whose colors are they? I don't care to wear the badge of a party I know nothing about."

"The match, my dear innocent cousin," returned Fred, "is to be played between the regiment stationed at Woking and a club composed of fellows who have got a degree at Cambridge. The pink is the military color."

Ellen took the knot of ribbons; but she

did not fasten it in her dress, and not all Fred's badinage could make her do so.

Percy avoided her pointedly. Ellen felt irritated beyond measure with him. She could not believe in the reality of his feelings, and could not bear to think of what he had told her. She held it as showing the most contemptible weakness, even if it were true, which she doubted.

Fred drove her and two of his younger sisters in the little pony-carriage. Ellen was to go in the character of the governess, as she persisted in going. She felt her position no indignity, and was very bright and merry. For some reason she was intensely excited. Her cheeks were flushed with an exquisite color, and her eyes were brighter than Fred had ever seen them.

The match was to be played on the Woking cricket-ground, a piece of flat grass-land by the river, surrounded by some noble trees. A number of gayly dressed visitors had arrived, and gay flags were fluttering from the tents erected at each end; and the regimental band played enlivening airs at intervals.

The Prideaux family knew a number of people, and they joined a large group under the trees. Ellen stood a little apart with Fred and her pupils.

"My governess," Mrs. Prideaux said to her friends.

Ellen heard it, and smiled. She did not care in the least. As she chatted with Fred her eyes wandered restlessly over the groups. He was watching her with a mischievous smile, and her sudden start and color made him follow the direction of her glance.

A group of ladies with blue ribbons in their dresses, attended by some good-looking men, had just entered the ground. They walked slowly up under the trees, toward the spot where Ellen and her party stood. The youngest of the Davenants, a pretty girl, had fallen a little behind, chatting gayly to her companion, a very handsome, manly fellow. He was fair, with the brightest of blue eyes and a golden mustache. He was talking merrily enough to his companion, but his eyes wandered eagerly around. Ellen did not glance in his direction again; but he saw her, and stepped forward, and whispered something to a sweet-faced woman in front. Her eyes sought Ellen at once, and rested on her with evident approval.

Fred watched all this by-play, and was

quite prepared for what followed. The Davenants joined the group where the Prideaux were standing, and a great deal of greeting went on. Ellen tried to talk carelessly to Fred, but her voice faltered. A few moments of suspense, a dreary feeling that she was forgotten, and then a frank voice with a tremor of emotion in it said at her side, —

"Did you get your Horace, Miss Chandos?"

She turned quickly, and shook hands with the speaker. With the tenderest of glances the blue eyes met hers. Ellen felt dizzy with happiness.

"I went to North Wales last week," he said in a low voice. "Mrs. Forsyth told me you were here. I am so glad you came today."

"Yes?"

"I should have come to see you tomorrow, though," said Mr. Forbes, looking smilingly at the down-dropped eyes. "But I want you to know my mother, and she wants to know you."

He stepped back, and called her; and Ellen had an earnest welcoming shake of the hand, and a kindly glance from eyes that were enough like Arthur's to make her love them at once. Then more introductions followed between the Davenants and Miss Chandos.

Fred disappeared with the unruly pupils, and Ellen found herself seated under the trees by Mrs. Forbes, and the Misses Davenant and Arthur standing at her side, the latter neglecting his duties as captain to talk to her for a few moments.

"You have no colors," he said. "Little traitress, you do not dare to be neutral?"

"No," she returned, with an upward look that was delicious to meet.

"Miss Davenant," he said, "have you a bit of blue ribbon? The fortunes of the day depend upon my getting some."

Miss Davenant had a roll of ribbon in her pocket, and a piece was soon cut off and knotted into a bow for Ellen's neck. Then Arthur went off to his work, and Ellen talked to Mrs. Forbes, all the time watching her son's tall figure, with a look that a man receives only from one pair of eyes all his life.

Ellen's reception by Mrs. Forbes and the Davenants, the most distinguished people on the ground, was not lost on Mrs. Prideaux and her daughters. They could not

understand it; and their amazement and annoyance were increased more and more as the day went on. There was no mistaking Arthur Forbes's attention to the young governess.

"What does he mean by it?" said Mrs. Prideaux to Percy. "If Ellen were anybody else, I should say" —

Percy interrupted her savagely, with, —

"It does n't require much perception to see what Arthur Forbes means, mother. He and Ellen are old friends, and quite understand each other."

Percy was looking intensely wretched and ill-tempered. His mother and sisters put it down to the heat of the day; Esther, to a mild flirtation she was carrying on with one of the officers of the regiment. Only one person was clear-sighted enough to detect some deeper reason for the young man's haggard face. Mr. Clare did not care particularly for cricket; but he had brought his sister, and now he stood a little apart from the merry groups, watching by turns Esther and her lover. Esther was seated on the grass, evidently intensely happy. Something in her face reminded Mr. Clare of the rhapsody of the water-wagtail —

"It was for my accommodation

Nature rose when I was born;
Should I die, the whole creation

Back to nothing would return.

Sun, moon, stars, the earth, you see,
All the world was made for me."

The Vicar smiled as he quoted the verse to himself, but it was a sad smile. He knew enough of human life to feel that Esther had bitter schooling in store for her. His eyes turned to Percy, who certainly looked very unlike a happy lover; and something of the truth came to him, as he saw how Percy's eyes were on Ellen, even while he talked to his betrothed.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Prideaux was very cross to Ellen when they reached home, and lectured her severely about her behaviour during the day. But Ellen was too happy to care for anything. Something Arthur had whispered to her, as they parted, made her utterly careless as to her aunt's bitter words. She saw her pupils safely in bed, and, too excited to sit still in the school-room, she threw a

shawl over her shoulders, and went out into the fresh, dewy garden.

The moon was full, and the clear light shone pleasantly down upon the Lindens. Ellen walked slowly up and down the broad walk, under the trembling shadows. There was a nightingale singing in a bush close by, and its full exquisite song seemed an echo of the gladness in her heart.

The drawing-room windows were open, and she could hear Esther playing. Esther played correctly; but Ellen could hardly bear to hear the spiritless rendering of one of her favorite sonatas; and she turned and walked farther away from the house, down a walk bordered on each side by high laurels. There was a little shrubbery at the end of the walk, with a summer-house in it. The moonlight fell clearly through the lattice-work, and Ellen saw at once, as she turned the corner, that Percy was seated at the little table, with his head buried in his hands. He heard her step, and started up before she could draw back.

"Ellen, stay one moment! I shall never ask anything of you again; let me speak to you now!"

Ellen stood still, and he came to her side, and looked wildly into her face.

"This Arthur Forbes," he said; "are you going to marry him?"

"Yes," answered Ellen unshrinkingly. "Percy, dear Cousin Percy, what a happy life you will have with darling Esther!"

"Hush!" he said, in a tone that frightened Ellen, brave as she was. "I can never marry her; how can I? I hate her, Ellen! I hate her smooth selfish ways and her silly face! I will not marry her!"

Percy was but a boy still, and Ellen pitied him with the mother-feeling all true women have. He leaned back against the summer-house door, and covered his face with his hands, with a gesture of utter despair. Ellen went to his side, and put her hand gently upon his shoulder.

"Be true to your own true self, dear Percy," she said earnestly. "This madness will pass, and leave manhood unsullied, if you will only be strong."

"O Ellen, I cannot help it! I love you more than heaven and earth. What shall I do, dear?"

In pitiful trust he rested his head upon her shoulder. Ellen touched his brow lightly with her hand, and smoothed back the damp hair. What could she say?

Some words were on her lips, when a hasty exclamation startled them both. Percy hastily drew back from Ellen; and they both turned, to see Mrs. Prideaux and Esther standing in the moonlight. Ellen did not speak; she stood perfectly still, while Percy went forward and addressed Esther.

"I don't know what you have heard," he said. "I will tell you the truth now. I have never really loved you. It was all a bitter mistake. I am thankful you have found it out before it was too late!"

With a gesture he stopped his mother's exclamation.

"It is not Ellen's fault, mother; she is engaged to Arthur Forbes. I am to blame, if there is any blame. Esther and I were too young to know our own minds when we were engaged."

"I don't understand," said Esther faintly. "Don't you care for me at all, Percy?"

Mrs. Prideaux took her arm.

"Come away, Esther darling. Ellen Chandos has repaid the care I have given her by ruining my life."

But Ellen was gone. Percy attempted to speak; but his mother would not hear him, and he was left alone.

Esther could not realize what had happened. She hardly believed it, even the next morning, when a letter was brought to her from Percy. He had gone away; he was never coming back any more. The gilded future that had been so near to Mrs. Prideaux had come down with an awful crash.

Poor little Esther! She read the letter that had cost Percy half the night to write, gradually getting the truth into her stunned brain. Then she put it away from her, into her desk,—a little ivory inlaid toy, full of Percy's letters and his presents. She dressed with as much care as usual, and went down to the breakfast-room, very white and quiet. Mrs. Prideaux met her at the door.

"I was coming to you, my darling."

"Thank you," said her niece, looking steadily into her face, "I am quite well. I should like my breakfast."

She passed Mrs. Prideaux, and sat down at the gayly appointed table, and poured out her coffee with a steady hand. No one else was in the room. Mrs. Prideaux leaned over the back of her niece's chair, and touched her hair tremblingly.

"O Esther, Esther!"

But Esther did not speak.

"It was all Ellen's fault. Percy will come to his senses soon, and we shall all be happy again."

Esther's smooth face hardened.

"I shall never forgive him, aunt. We are parted forever. He may marry Ellen if he likes."

The entrance of Mrs. Prideaux's daughters stopped the pleading of the miserable mother, and the breakfast went on, Esther talking a little more than usual. After breakfast Mr. Forbes was announced. He asked to see Miss Chandos, but Mrs. Prideaux had given orders that he was to be shown into the drawing-room where she was.

After a little desultory conversation, Mr. Forbes requested to see Ellen; and Mrs. Prideaux, who had with difficulty controlled herself for so long, hastened to tell him the story of the previous night, after a fashion of her own. Mr. Forbes listened gravely, but he made no remark of any sort. He could have told Mrs. Prideaux that he had seen Percy that morning, and had had a long talk with him; but he said nothing till the story was finished. Then he asked to see Ellen. His quiet, determined manner had effect on Mrs. Prideaux; and, after some hesitation, she went up to the school-room. Ellen was there, going through the usual routine, and looking very much distressed and excited.

"Mr. Forbes wants to speak to you. I have told him everything, Ellen. He knows what an ungrateful, wicked girl you are."

Ellen looked pitifully into her aunt's face.

"O aunt, I never thought; I would rather anything but this had happened!"

But Mrs. Prideaux turned away coldly. She could never forgive her niece.

Ellen went down-stairs. All her nerves were throbbing with pain. Her trembling hand could scarcely open the drawing-room door. She looked timidly into her lover's

face, when she entered,—only one look; the next moment her face was hidden, and she was held tightly in his arms.

"My darling, my poor darling!"

Ellen went back to Llandinvawr next day; and in the autumn she was married. By that time Percy was teaching in one of the public schools, and Mrs. Prideaux had gone to live with him. For her heart yearned for her darling boy, and she found her position very different at the Lindens now. Esther had a quiet way of asserting her authority as mistress which was very galling to bear.

So the Lindens were soon let again, and Esther went abroad under the chaperonage of an old friend of the family. It was two years before she came back.

Ellen was living in London; and she and Esther often met in society. It was about six months after Esther's return to England, when Mrs. Arthur Forbes and Miss Prideaux were invited to a brilliant garden-party at Lady Mowbray's pretty house at Twickenham.

Since her marriage Ellen had not had any long conversation with the heiress; and she was rather surprised when Esther drew her away from the knot of clever talkers that always gathered round Mr. Forbes's brilliant wife.

"I want to tell you something, Ellen," she said, with a little quiver in her voice. "I am going to be married!"

Ellen looked at her without speaking; but Esther understood the look of her eyes.

"Oh, no, no,—not to Percy; I have forgotten him,—to Mr. Clarel! He has loved me all my life, Ellen."

Percy never married. He became a famous man; but he was never very rich, and he died before his mother. Esther was happy as a rector's wife. The existence suited her, and she was considered a most exemplary and beautiful-minded woman. There was no one, however, who understood her better than her husband, much as he loved her.

FAIR AS A LILY.

BY MISS FANNY FRANCIS.

A spacious old-fashioned garden, a sky flushed with the sun setting, a sea tossed into great waves by a strong west wind—I saw it all as one sees things in a dream. I cared nothing just then for the sunset, nor for the stretch of blue-green waters,—I cared only for one thing in my world, and that was the girl sitting at my feet, in crimson rays of light that pierced the boughs.

"You are dreadfully tiresome, Dane! What can you be thinking of?" She looked up into my face as she said it. "Are you sorry to have me at home again?"

Sorry! I felt my lips quiver, and the hot blood rush into my face.

"I am far from sorry, Lily."

"Then show me you are glad. Tell me everything that has happened since I went away."

She got up and came to my side, laying her cheek against my arm. I was quite old and grave in her young eyes. Ever since she was a baby she had loved me, in her willful way, as her big brother. But with me it was different. I loved her as a man loves once in life; I love her still.

We were very simple folk. I farmed the land my father farmed before me, my quiet mother kept house, and Lily, the child of an old friend of my father's, lived with us, and made the old home bright,—so bright she made it, that, when she went to visit her mother's relatives in London, we felt as if our little world had lost its light. My father had promised her mother, that, when she grew old enough to choose for herself, she should go to London, and see her mother's people, if she wished to hold them as her people. We hardly cared to give her up to them. They were rich, these Lawrences, but they had been harsh and cold to poor little Lily's pretty mother, who at the last had so sorely needed the help they would not yield. But on this glad summer day our darling had come back to us to be our own once more.

Thinking of all this, my heart was very full as she pressed her face against my arm in the dim shadowy old garden.

"I scarcely know what has happened,

child," I said in answer to her last demand. "The days were dull without you. I missed you dreadfully."

"Did you, Dane? I'm so glad of that! I told Mrs. Lawrence I could not possibly stay a day longer from Ashfield, for I knew you wanted me home sadly. I wish you could see Mrs. Lawrence, Dane; she is so beautiful, and she's quite young, though she is a widow."

I did not care to tell her just then that I had seen Mrs. Lawrence, and knew well how fair her proud, cold face was.

"You could not guess what she said of you, Dane." She lifted her head, and looked at me. "She said you must be quite a fusty old bachelor by this time."

"So I am, dear." I looked at the blossom-sweet face, at the smiling lips and bright eyes, and I did indeed feel by bitter contrast old and fusty.

"She said that you were old enough to be my father," the girl went on, her expression changing; "but I told her she was quite mistaken. How could she tell? You were nicer and younger a great deal, I said, than Captain Boyd."

"Who is Captain Boyd, Lily?"

"Oh, a gentleman they all make a great fuss about! People say she will marry him some day."

"But did you speak out your honest thoughts, when you said I was nicer than the captain, Lily?"

"You know I did. You know you are very handsome and very clever, and much nicer in every way than those prim city men."

I bent and kissed the shining golden hair.

"You have learned the art of flattery."

"The truth is not flattery,—you told me that yourself,—and I am speaking nothing but the simple truth."

The crimson and the gold, the pearly white and the tremulous opal had died out of the sky. Long whitelines on the face of the sea told that out in the open the wind had risen to a gale. My mother was calling to us to come in.

"One moment, Lily. The supper can

wait. When you were going away you kissed me. You have not kissed me since you came back."

She lifted her face to mine under the shade of the swaying branches, and kissed me on the lips; and then we went into the house together. My mother met us in the porch.

"There is a letter for you, Dane, from King's Court. Mr. Cyril has come home."

I went on after Lily, and put the letter unopened into my pocket. I gave no heed to it or the writer. We were very happy together, we three. The gale broke over us as the night fell; the boom of the waves, the rolling dash of the surf on the shingle, came to our ears as we talked. Lily shivered as she heard it.

"Often while I have been away I fancied that I could hear the sea as it sounds to-night," she said, "and once I dreamed that the great hissing waves were flowing over me. When I told Mrs. Lawrence in the morning, she said it was an ugly dream, — the sea means trouble to most people."

My mother looked grave at all this.

"The storm of to-night scatters your dream, Lily," I put in. "Let us hope it boded you no more trouble than a rough and wet welcome home."

"Dane," my mother cried out, "to hear you one would think you believed in such rubbish. The child's head is far too full of such idle fancies. Don't lead her to think you have faith in them too."

"Oh, but he has!" Lily said, getting up and kissing my mother first on one cheek and then on the other. "Every one has if they would but own it."

With a saucy laugh she went away to bed, and we heard her little feet go tripping presently across the rooms overhead.

The next day was a busy one; I did not get home to dinner. It was growing dusk and the moon had risen before I reached the house.

Dusty as I was, I passed straight into our little sitting-room. Through the dust came the perfume of flowers — of roses — and the sound of voices, and I felt myself stayed on the threshold. Lily did not see me; the man standing before her, with his hands clasped on the back of a chair, did not see me either. Without a word, I turned and hurried up to my room. I was like a man hurt in the dark; I felt a thrust, keen and real enough, but I could not have told whence

it came. The tea was waiting when I descended. Cyril Kingsley rose with his easy grace, and shook my hand warmly.

"I was not long in finding my way here," he said, "and I have been made so welcome that I am afraid I shall be coming again and again."

I was cold enough, but he never heeded.

"It is a long time since you were here before," my mother said. "Lily was a little girl when you went away."

"I have been away six years, and now I find many changes. Miss Lily has changed with the rest."

He looked at her as he said it, and her face flushed under his eyes. Then I felt that I almost hated him, this man with his high-bred face, his easy, winsome graciousness. When the tea was over, my mother took out her knitting, and Lily, at Cyril Kingsley's earnest request, sat down to the piano. Lying back in his chair, he watched her in silence, and I watched him.

This master of King's Court was a very handsome man, — I could not deny that. Not so tall as I was by perhaps half a head, he was yet my equal in strength: his broad shoulders, his lithe, shapely limbs, showed me that. He was dark, and pale almost to delicacy. His eyes, under their heavy-fringed lids, had a warm glow in them.

"When the swallows homeward fly" — the words rang out true and sweet. In the quiet room we three sat and listened in a charmed silence. The roses drooped in their stands; the air was heavy with their perfume. The ringing voice, yearning and tender, seemed to bring the tears very near our eyes. When it ceased, the silence was almost painful for an instant; and then Cyril Kingsley rose and crossed over to the piano. I could not hear the words, but I saw the smile that came to Lily's lips.

"If you care to hear, I will sing something for you," he said. "It is but a simple little thing; I heard a young peasant-girl sing it last summer in Tyrol."

It was, as he had said, a simple thing, — a plaintive song of love; of love that should last until the "great hills faded," and the brooks "forgot their song." Lily listened with dreaming eyes. No wonder the man looking at her sang with power and passion; no wonder his eyes, looking into hers, told her how passing fair he thought her.

It seemed to me hours after that when he

left us at the porch of our house. The moonlight made the night as day; the far-away corn-fields looked like gently swaying golden seas. Very scant attention the master of King's Court had paid to business that night. He went away smiling and looking back as he went. We could see him pass along the open road till he turned aside into the meadows; and then the shadows hid him.

"And so," I thought, a little bitterly, "he will pass out of our lives when once our rustic simplicity ceases to amuse him." Something of this I said aloud to Lily. To my surprise she was vexed at me.

"Why do you speak as if we were so far apart, Dane? He is only a gentleman after all, and you are that."

I laughed at her. Standing there, with my strong brown hands on the bar of the gate, the tan of the sun and the rain on my face, I could not help laughing. The next instant I was sorry for my rudeness.

"Listen to me, little Lily," I said gravely enough; "you are right and yet wrong in thinking of Cyril Kingsley and myself as equals. Our family is as good as his; we have had honest men and pure fair women of our name in the old home for generations. But we are only yeomen after all, or gentlemen-farmers, if you like that better. Bit by bit these Kingsleys have climbed above that. They have married and given in marriage judiciously. They have risen; we have stood still. Yet in many things I am now — I hope ever to be — as true a gentleman as the best of them."

"Are they very rich, Dane?"

"Very rich and very proud, — not without some reason. King's Court is a beautiful old place; its plate and pictures are famous among us. The land has been managed well too. They are a race wise in their generation. I am half inclined to close with his offer about the ten-acre field. He said the truth: it would be well for him, and not ill for myself."

I might have spared my talk; Lily was not listening to me. She was leaning over the gate, her face was turned toward the sea; the moonlight touched her features tenderly; the dainty lips, the low wide forehead, unwrinkled as a child's, the dusky violet eyes showed out as clearly as if it had been day. Suddenly through the quiet, the intense sultry quiet, voices came, — rough and homely voices enough, but softened by

distance. Some fishermen going down to the shore were singing an old coast ballad.

"What is that they are singing, Dane? I seem to know the air. Listen! That is the chorus, I suppose. Something about 'love,' for they are singing that word over and over."

I did not answer for a few moments. I knew the song well, as did she; but she had forgotten it. I too had distinguished one word, as it rose and swelled over the others again and again, in the quaint old chorus; but it was a word far different from "love." It was "death."

"Let us go in," I said, turning away abruptly from the gate. "It has become quite chilly."

She turned and walked beside me to the house.

"Is it not a sweet old place, Dane?" she said. "I did not quite know, I think, until I had seen other homes, how beautiful mine was."

"My love, I am glad you are content." My voice broke in spite of me.

"Are you coming in tonight, children?" my mother cried, coming out into the porch to meet us. "You have no sense, Dane, — to keep Lily out walking through the grass while the dew is falling?"

"I am very glad that you have 'no sense,'" the girl whispered, pressing her velvety lips to my hand as she passed in before me.

I was very busy that autumn, as a man must be who has much work and few to do it. But it was for my own I toiled early and late, and I asked no higher or lighter task. Lily was with me. She had not wearied of us, as Mrs. Lawrence had told her she would. She even seemed to like the old home better day by day. In September Mrs. Lawrence came to us. She and Lily often went to parties that were given in King's Court; but, as a rule, I excused myself from going with them. Yet I was glad Lily should go if it gave her any pleasure. One day toward the close of October Cyril Kingsley rode over, as he had often done of late.

"I have come to ask you to grant me a favor, Mrs. Carew," he said, as he shook hands with my mother; "and it is a great favor, I assure you. My mother sends me in her name. You must please to look upon me as her accredited ambassador," he said, laughing.

"And what is the favor that it would be in my power to grant you, Mr. Kingsley?"

"On the twenty-first of next month we give a ball, as you know. But, beside the ball, we are getting up charades and *tableaux vivants*. You know the style of thing?" He paused an instant, and looked into my mother's face a little anxiously. "Miss Vaughan and Dr. Gray's girls are to take parts. They want Miss Lily to join them. My mother wishes it. This is the favor I would ask." He looked from Lily, flushed and eager, to my mother, sitting so quiet, and even grave.

"I do not like charades, or anything that savors of the stage," my mother began. "It pains me much to refuse any request of yours; but—"

"You have not refused it," he broke in in his earnestness. "You will surely not refuse it, dear Mrs. Carew? It is quite unlike acting: I could well understand your dislike to anything of that sort. This is simply to form, for a few moments, part of a living picture for the pleasure of a few of our choicest friends. You could not, I am sure, object to that." I saw my mother waver. He saw it too. "I dare not go home and tell my mother that she cannot have her wish. It would spoil so much of the pleasure she is taking in our plans. She has her heart set on Miss Lily's assuming a character."

My mother looked at him as he stood beside her, earnest and pleading, and her sweet old face flushed and softened. Every one in the country knew how handsome Cyril Kingsley looked on his frail, ailing lady-mother. That last shot won the battle.

"Your mother shall not be disappointed. I know I can trust Lily to her."

His thanks were simple enough, but any one who had seen the smile on his lips would have known that they were sincere.

After that afternoon Lily was very often at King's Court. The girl was wild with delight. She could talk of nothing but the Kingsleys, their guests, and the coming ball. She would walk beside me up and down the shady walks of the orchard, telling me all she had seen and done at King's Court during the day. Mrs. Kingsley had herself chosen what she should appear as in the tableaux. In one she was to be the Elaine to Cyril Kingsley's Lancelot; in another she would be Marguerite. The parts had been well

chosen, I thought. She was fair and sweet enough for either an Elaine or a Marguerite. I could not care much for these things myself, but she cared for them, and they sufficed me. At length the day came for the "grand and final rehearsal," as Lily called it. She went to the Court quite early in the morning, and, as the November dust was closing in, I took my pipe and went down to the gate to watch for her coming. It was a wild, misty evening. The water lapping the shingle sounded mournfully through the silvery mist. The shadows gathered thickly about me, as I leaned on the old gate and waited.

"You are dreaming, Mr. Carew. Are yours sad or happy dreams?"

The voice so near startled me. I turned in haste, and turned clumsily, for my foot caught in a lady's dress, and I saw Mrs. Lawrence, who was paying us a visit, beside me.

"I am afraid I have done some damage to your dress," I said, feeling a little awkward, I scarcely knew why.

"That can be easily rectified. But you have not answered my question."

She leaned her arm on the gate, much as I had been leaning mine, and seemed to be waiting for an answer. She had flung a woollen shawl over her head, a soft crimson shawl, from out of which her pale face showed clearly. Standing thus, in the dusk of the autumn night, she made a quaint, pretty picture. She was beautiful, but her beauty was nothing to me, nor could it ever grow to be anything.

"I was scarcely dreaming, Mrs. Lawrence; I was thinking things over."

"And your thoughts were happy ones."

"Nay," I cried, laughing and flushing, though that she could not see, "I did not say so; but, since you have guessed so well, they were."

"By 'thinking things over,' did you mean past things, Mr. Carew?"

"Yes, and future."

"Ah, I believe in the future! But I should utterly detest dreaming over the past. What good comes from it? I have no pity for the sickly poets who are forever raving over the 'by-gones.'"

There was half-bitter mockery in her voice, but there was also an undertone of sadness in it, or I fancied so.

"You are hard on the poor poets," I said.

"Yet, if they be true poets, they sing as

they feel. And it must be sad for one to know that his store of joy or peace is laid by forever in the past. Again, the future, however rich in promise, is not ours to hold and enjoy. For my part, I am inclined to make the best that I can of the present."

She smiled, — a sweet smile, that softened the cold, beautiful face.

"You are as practical as ever, I see."

The mist had gathered closer about us; the wind was rising too, and the sea sent up a fuller, angrier sound.

"I am going away tomorrow, Mr. Carew, and I may never see Ashfield again."

"I trust that you will. You will always be welcome."

"Thank you. But I shall not care to come."

I bowed. The words, almost haughty in their frankness, had chilled me.

"Will you walk back with me to the house? There is something I want to say to you." She turned, and I turned beside her. "I have a word of warning to speak," she said, "and I scarcely know how to speak it. You will probably think me unkind and officious, but I shall not mind that if you will only believe me." I listened to her in silence. "You are a good man, and therefore you have faith in the goodness of others. That faith makes you blind. A friend is winning your love from you, and you do not see it."

The words went through my brain like a pistol-shot. I felt as if my heart stopped its beat for an instant, and then my cool temper came to my aid.

"You have said too much or too little. Have you any proof of the truth of your words?"

In spite of me, my voice had a harsh, strained sound. In spite of me, a terrible fear rose and throbbed at my heart.

"You need but to open your eyes to see proofs in plenty."

"But Cyril Kingsley — I know it is of him you speak — is as good as a married man. Every one knows that he and Miss Vaughan are engaged."

"What 'every one' knows is seldom the true tale," Mrs. Lawrence said coldly. "He may marry Beatrice Vaughan for ought I know; meantime he is fast winning Lily from you. Go to this ball, and see things as they are. Do anything but wait and hope for a joy that may never be yours."

She passed into the house. I went back

to the gate, and resumed my watch; but how differently! I had not been there five minutes when they came, Lily and Cyril Kingsley, walking together through the mist. As they reached the gate, Lily gave a little scream, and laughed, putting out her gloved hand to touch me.

"Are you a ghost, Dane, or a mortal?"

I took her hand, and put it on my arm.

"In future, Mr. Kingsley, I will see Lily home myself whenever she has occasion to be out so late as this."

He simply bowed in answer. I could not see his face, but his even, pleasant voice, as he spoke to Lily, jarred upon me. I felt as if I should have dearly liked to quarrel with him, — to quarrel and fight it out man to man. He went away with a light "good-night," and I knew, as well as if he had told me in so many words, that he scoffed at me and my mad, jealous anger.

When I looked at Lily's face in the lighted hall, I knew that she was angry. The dark eyes turned from me, the delicate scarlet lips were scornful.

The next day Mrs. Lawrence left us. I drove her into Moston to catch the five-o'clock train. In her easy, careless way, she talked of a hundred things; but she never once named Lily or Cyril Kingsley, and I did not. As the train was about to start she leaned forward and spoke through the window.

"I shall expect to hear that you changed your mind in the last half-hour, and took Lily yourself to the ball."

The next moment the train swept past me, as I stood alone on the little platform, and the face that looked at me for an instant with grave, almost tender eyes seemed to repeat the warning given on the previous night.

"I will take her advice and go," I said to myself.

I was out more than usual during those dull November days, for I had no peace at home. Lily was still angry with me; she turned from my proffered kindnesses, she seldom spoke to me, she never even looked at me if she could help it. Dr. Gray's carriage was to call for her and take her to King's Court. No one even thought of my going and taking her myself. I had bought Lily a present one day when I was in Moston. I had intended keeping it for her birthday in May, but, knowing she had no ornaments suitable for the ball, I bethought

me of my hidden treasures. They were poor treasures, after all,—only a pair of pearl ear-drops, and a pretty heart-shaped locket to match the drops. The pale lustrous pearls, the delicate carved gold, seemed fitting adornment for my darling. Now they had lost their value in my eyes,—so changed was she that I scarcely knew whether she would wear them.

The twenty-first came at last. Lily had been busy in her own room all the morning. It was fast getting dusk when she descended to the sitting-room and sat down before the fire. *She did not see me among the shadows.* Suddenly I remembered my present. I rose quietly, yet not so quietly but that she heard me, and, turning quickly, she got up from her chair as if to go away.

"Do not go yet. I have something to show you, Lily. See," I said, crossing to her side, "I bought these a month ago for your birthday gift, but I have just been thinking you might like to wear them to-night."

I held the open case toward her as I spoke.

"O Dane! And I did not deserve them!"

Then all my anger, my doubt, my sore jealous fear vanished. She was my darling again,—*the one love of my life.*

"You do deserve them," I said, kneeling down on the rug at her feet and drawing her face to my breast. "There is no good thing on this earth that you would not deserve."

She put up her hand and stroked my brown cheek softly.

"But I have been cross with you, Dane. I was angry with you, and said hard words about you to myself, and I should never, never have done that. Can you forgive me?"

The red light fell on her upturned face. I felt my heart throb, and the passionate tender words died on my lips. I had no power to tell her how I loved her, no power to plead with her for the love I craved in return. I bent my head and kissed her as softly as a brother might have done. I dared not trust my coward tongue to tell her how truly I had forgiven her, how little I saw in her to forgive.

I did not go to the ball that night. Would it have been better if I had? Could any power on earth have turned the cruel hand of Fate aside and left my life its brightness? Who can say? We know, the wisest of us,

so little. When we trust to our own strength, it fails us. When we take counsel of our hopes, we find too late that they are false prophets, every one of them.

Lily came to show herself to me before she went. She stole very softly into the darkened room. I did not hear the sound of her little feet on the floor.

"Strike a light and look at me, Dane. The carriage will be here in a moment."

She was like a happy child. The sweet lips were smiling, the clear eyes glowed like stars under her silken lashes. There were roses in her hair and in her little gloved hands. The locket I had given her gleamed on her bosom.

"Do I look nice?" she cried, lifting her face to mine. "Do you like my dress? And are not my ear-rings lovely?"

She was fluttering about as she talked, her pretty pale silk skirts sweeping behind her over the worn old carpet. When she was gone the house seemed to grow suddenly quiet and dull. I tried to settle to some work, but the lines of figures in the ledger baffled me. The room grew close and stifling. Some spirit of unrest kept prompting me to walk as far as King's Court,—not to go in, of course. "But at least you will be nearer to Lily," my foolish heart said.

The house gleamed out from among the trees long before I reached it. As I came to a stand under the beeches, the beat of the dancers' feet could be heard distinctly through the quiet of the starless misty night. After a time spent in watching the lighted windows and the flying couples that whirled and eddied past them, I began to think I had been a fool for my pains and to wish myself home again. But, before turning away, I ventured up to the house, feeling sure that no one would see me.

The library was lighted up, but the heavy pile curtains were undrawn, and I, looking in, saw the room clearly. Lily was there, standing by the fire; Cyril Kingsley was beside her. The room was empty save for those two talking in the glow of the fire-light. I could see Lily's face, bent and pale, and Cyril Kingsley's, flushed and earnest. He had taken her hands into his as he bent above her. I saw him touch the golden curls of her hair with his lips. The high-bred, haughty face was all aglow. No wonder my darling loved him, no wonder the young heart thrilled into new life at the

words full of subtlest power. Standing without in the cold and the mist, I watched them, those two happy lovers, and it seemed to me as if the strength died out of my heart at the sight. It was true then, — the warning that Mrs. Lawrence had given me. This man loved her, and he had won her to love him.

"She will be happy in her grand home, — happy and contented as she never could have been in my poor one." So I said to myself as I stood there. The music clashed louder, light laughter and soft voices came to me. I saw him stoop and kiss the hands he held, while her head bent lower and lower till it almost touched his breast. Then I turned and went home, groping my way through the meadows like a man suddenly struck blind. I had lost more than my love that night. I had lost my hope, my faith, my reason almost. It was hours after that before Lily returned. My mother was waiting up for her. I too was waiting, but they did not know. She came in, wan and weary enough. The roses were drooping in her hair, the light had died out of her eyes. And yet it seemed to me that the fair young face was touched with a new charin, that the calm of a tender joy was on it.

With the morning Cyril Kingsley appeared. He had come, he said, to tell my mother "all about the ball and the charades." I did not care to stay and hear him, but, before I could get away, my mother asked how Lily had gone through her parts.

"Her parts were simply perfect," he said, with a quick, genuine warmth. "The 'fair Elaine' herself, the 'lily-maid of Astolat,' never looked more fair than Miss Lily looked last night."

I went away with a throb of bitter, pained anger at my heart.

"Ay," I said to myself, "a fair Elaine indeed, so fair that she has won her Lancelet."

Very quietly the winter stole away. Toward Christmas King's Court filled with guests as usual; but, no matter how many guests claimed him at home, Cyril Kingsley found time to come — first on one pretext, then on another — almost every day to the farm.

My mother liked him; she even felt a little flattered by his friendship. Lily loved him; she lived in his smile; the lightest word he spoke was music in her ears. What

did it matter that I, the surly master of the house, held aloof from him and hated him? Yes; it had come to that, — I hated him.

Beatrice Vaughan had come back to King's Court, and ever-busy rumor had it that she would reign there as its mistress before the roses bloomed again. This gossip troubled me sorely; it haunted me day and night. What if it proved true, and no mere idle tale? The question, "Could Lily bear it and live?" rose again and again before me. I dared not look into the future. If Cyril Kingsley played a false part, Lily herself never doubted him. I, who knew what love was, could see how well she loved him, how surely she trusted in his love. I was a strong man, but those winter days tried my strength. To me it was as the bitterness of death to watch those two who had no thought but for each other. I saw and knew many things of which my simple mother never dreamed. Often and often I had seen them in the meadows or walking through the pretty lanes side by side, and they had never seen me, had not even looked up from their low talk as they went along.

One day in February I had been to Mos-ton; my nearest road home lay through King's Court Wood, and I took that. I had no thought of meeting them on that day; I had no thought for anything but my own business. It was a clear, bright day; a high wind lifted the soddened leaves and tossed the bare branches. Swiftly, like flying birds, the shadows chased each other over the open path, and the sound of the sea came up and mingled fitfully with the wind. It was cold, almost stormy; but there was a faint stir of the coming spring abroad. The pungent odor of the pines filled the air, and hardy sparrows sang cheerily. I walked along with bent head like a man who does not heed; and yet I heeded. The odor of the pines, the fresh blowing of the north wind, stirs that memory still. Suddenly the sound of voices reached me; I did not need to look to know that Lily and Cyril Kingsley had turned into the path immediately before me. I heard every word he was saying; he was telling her in his earnest way how he loved her with such love as he had not dreamed he could ever feel for any one.

"And you know it," he said, drawing her close to him under the swaying branches. "You could not doubt my love, — you do

not doubt it." He was looking into the face upturned to his, and as he looked his own flushed redly. "Tell me as you told me the other night, 'I love you dearly, Cyril, — must always love you till I die.'"

The shadows of the sombre pine-trees closed about them as the girl bent her head and answered as he bade her. I was close beside them then. I could have put out my hand and touched hers as it lay on his shoulder, — there were but a few steps between us.

"Let the future bring what it may," he said, kissing the sweet lips so close to his own, "we have had our happy hours, my darling. It cannot rob us of them, nor of our love."

They walked on and away from me; I did not even look after them. What right had I, with my harsh words and harsher thoughts, to come in and mar their loving? That was in February. In March Cyril Kingsley left home for a time. He went to Paris, and the day before he went he came to the farm to say good-bye.

"I may be away for a month, Mrs. Carew, or I may be gone only a week, but I could not leave without seeing you all."

He did not stay long with us. He had "a hundred things to see to," he said, and he would leave by the early train next morning for London.

My mother and Lily went out into the porch with him, as they knew he liked them to do, and I for once followed. I saw he looked down earnestly into Lily's face as her hand lay in his for an instant, but most of his spoken farewells were to my mother. I was glad and thankful to see him go. Half-way down the path he turned and lifted his hat gayly, and Lily and my mother bowed and smiled to him as he turned away. If she felt this parting, I thought, looking at her and seeing how pale she was, how would she bear a final one?

That evening I had occasion to go to a house at the far end of the village. It was late, almost eleven o'clock, as I crossed the meadows on my way home. As I turned in at our own farm gate some one brushed quickly past me. It was a man, tall and slender, — I could see that much, for it was a comparatively clear night, and then a cloud covered the moon and I was in dense darkness for an instant. I called out loudly in my surprise, — no one answered me; I even made a step forward, but the man was

gone. When the moon shone out again the fields and the road were alike bare. For a moment I half doubted my own eyes, and then I thought that it must have been some one from the village after one of the servants, and that, not liking me to see him about at that late hour, he had made a quick run for it.

As I came up to the porch my eyes caught the glint of something light on the bare, brown earth. I kicked it first with my foot, then I lifted it up, and looked at it in the clear, bright moonlight. It was a man's glove. There was the stain of the damp soil upon it; but I knew it in an instant. It was Cyril Kingsley's. The delicate color, the size, the perfume, told me from whose hand it had fallen. A sudden passion of anger shook me; a furious, jealous rage that made my cheeks grow pale and clenched my teeth. It would have fared ill with the master of the King's Court if he had faced me then. I knew now who had slipped past me like a shadow at the farm gate. I knew that Cyril Kingsley had come back to take his farewell of Lily, unheard and unseen by us. The next morning, almost before the servants were astir, I was at King's Court.

"Mr. Cyril is up, but he is engaged," the man told me. "He is leaving for London by the first train this morning."

"I know that quite well; but I will not detain him long. Will you tell him that I am here, and that I must see him?"

The man went and did my bidding. He came back almost immediately.

"This way, if you please. My master will see you."

I followed him up the wide stairs, and along a passage pierced with high, narrow windows, from which one could see the gardens and the wood beyond them. He opened a door at the end of this passage, and left me on the threshold. The room was empty. I could see at a glance that it was a man's private sitting-room. Daggers, silver-mounted fencing-sticks, and gloves lay about, with fishing-rods and pipes of all shapes. There were a few good pictures on the walls, and the delicate tint of the rich diapers gave an air of luxury and refinement to the room. I did not sit down. I stood in the centre of the room and waited.

Cyril Kingsley soon came to me. In the clear morning light he looked pale, but not from fear, I knew. Even then I looked

upon him as a man who should never flinch before an enemy. He offered me a seat, but I would not take it, and, seeing that, he too stood.

"I am come, Mr. Kingsley, to ask you if there is any truth in the reports we have all heard that you are to be married in the summer to Miss Vaughan?"

I saw the surprise in his face. Then he flushed with anger.

"Let me first understand what right you have to ask that most singular question," he said.

I took from my coat-pocket the glove I had found on the previous night, and laid it on the table between us.

"Still I do not understand, Mr. Carew,"—almost smiling. "You are pleased to be enigmatical this morning."

"I will explain if you will allow me. Late last night, at my own gate, some one brushed quickly past me, some one who was evidently afraid to be seen, and who stole off under the shadow of the darkness. I found this glove on the garden path, where that man had dropped it. You were that man, Cyril Kingsley, and the glove is yours. I have a right to know what you mean by coming about my house irregularly, for of course I know that it was to see Lily that you came. I have come this morning to ask you simply if it can be true that, while you ask one girl to love you, you are engaged to marry another?" I spoke as calmly as I could, but I knew that very soon my anger would master my judgment.

"I grant your right in part, Mr. Carew," Cyril Kingsley said presently, lifting steadfast eyes to mine; "but I do rebel utterly against your manner of demanding it. I cannot be coerced into confidence. In a cooler moment we may both perhaps better understand each other."

I was as calm as he was then, rigid with intense anger.

"You must understand thus much even now,—nothing but death could come between you and my vengeance if you brought one pain into my Lily's life. You have won her to love you. If you are worthy of that love, I, who love her too, will never grudge it to you. But beware, Cyril Kingsley! The man who hurt her would have me to face!"

He looked back at me without a word. As I followed the servant out of the room I saw him still standing there, in the centre

of the long room, mute and still as I had left him.

It was the latter end of May before the family came back to the Court. I shall never forget the first Sunday that they came into church together, mother and son. The old church was sweet with the freshness of the May. Great bands of golden light fell through the windows and touched the quaint carvings on the old pulpit and the high oak pews. The grand, calm words of the minister floated through the quiet; and throughout the service I sat like a man on whose soul a heavy spell had fallen.

The service over, we found that Cyril Kingsley had let his mother go home alone in the carriage, and was waiting for us. I could not well refuse his offered hand, though I longed to refuse it. He walked home with us through the lanes. He had been to Paris, he told us, and then to Vienna. Even then I saw the change in him. There was the shadow of care in his eyes. At the farm gate he parted from us.

"I shall come in early tomorrow," he said, "to see Mrs. Carew. Tell her so, please."

When he came the next day he brought a present for my mother and for Lily,—a brooch for my mother, a brooch after her own heart, old-fashioned and quaint; and for Lily a bracelet of dull gold, studded with opals and turquoises that glowed and flickered as the light touched them. He smiled at her surprise and delight; he watched the eager changing face as though he could never tire of it; he would not let her thank him.

"I have done nothing worthy of thanks," he said; "I only gave myself pleasure."

After his return he did not come to the farm so often as he had used to do. But he saw Lily every day, I knew, and the knowledge chafed me and kept open the old sore wound of my jealous fear. To me Lily was always the same. In the dusk of the sultry nights she would walk with me while I smoked my pipe, among the apple-trees. She would bring her work or her book and sit on the wide low ledge of the office window while I was busy among my papers. With her little white hands clasped on my arm, she would pet me and tease me, and with the warm frank love of a child smile up into my face. To her I was then; as I had ever been, but a favorite elder brother.

Ah me! Hearts are strange things; mine nearly broke in those days. Often and often I told myself I would far rather lie at rest under the quiet earth; and sometimes I have wondered whether the day would ever come when I should be able to look back on my sore anguish and longing as on a troubled dream.

And through all I doubted Cyril Kingsley. I knew so well the deep-rooted pride of his race, and I feared for the poor little heart that had trusted its all of joy to his keeping. The end even then was close upon us; what I had dreaded was near at hand. One evening, toward the end of July, Cyril Kingsley came in to us: he was in his evening dress, with only a light dust-coat over it. We were about to sit down to our late tea, and when my mother asked him he joined us, though he had just come from his own dinner, we knew. The table had been set in the centre of the square room. The windows were flung wide open for the air, and dainty crimson and palest pink roses, with their shining leaves, clustered in thick, wild luxuriance about the old wooden framework. Every wind came laden with the perfume of the flowers in the garden. It was a still night,—unusually warm even for July.

As we sat over the meal, idling and talking, the blue of the sky darkened, and presently the far-off stars came out, and the moon rose and threw its long white bars of light across the faded carpet and the high stiff chairs.

We had all finished tea long before that, but we still lounged about in the shadowy room, enjoying the quiet and the scented dusk. Cyril Kingsley had risen, and was leaning against the frame of one of the wide windows, where with every little wind that stirred the wet leaves brushed his cheek.

"This reminds one of the nights in Southern Italy," he said. "It is beautiful enough to tempt a hermit out-of-doors. Look at your namesakes, Miss Lily. In this light they show like flowers carved out of solid silver, all jeweled over, and shining with an inner light of heaven."

"Those are my own flowers," Lily said, smiling, as she too left her chair and crossed to the open window beside him. "Dane had them planted for me, because, of all the flowers that grow, I love lilies and roses the best."

He looked down at her as she stood be-

side him, her pretty hair shining in the moonlight, her little hands loosely locked on the chair beside her.

"You remind me of Elsie in Longfellow's 'Golden Legend.' If you remember, she loved the saintly white lilies and the beautiful red roses just as you do. You could be like her in more things than that, I think."

She raised her head and looked at him. Even in the dim light her face looked flushed and bright.

"I hope I should try to be," she said softly. "If any one I loved needed my help, I would give it, if I could."

"I am sure of it. Since I have known you I have believed in many things I utterly scouted heretofore, the Elsie of life among the number."

We three strolled into the garden presently, leaving my mother to herself. Lily and Cyril Kingsley walked together up and down the shadowy old walks, but I did not join them. I went away to the far end of the garden, into the orchard, where the light was shut out almost by the trees, and there I smoked in quietness. The pain at my heart was keen that night. My head throbbed, and my eyes grew dim with the ache of it. It was all so bitter to me,—so bitter! Their love, their low, soft laughter, the very beauty of the quiet night, jarred on my nerves.

As I stood there, my shoulder against a tree-trunk, all the hopes and dreams of the past years gathered like ghosts about me. While I had hoped to win Lily I had scarcely known how much I loved her. She had grown into my heart and my life. She was the centre round which my simple life had moved. Every day had been brightened by her. The homely life, the hard work, had been sweet because she had been near me. Now that was over and done with. The love that had so glorified my life had been turned into a very root of pain. As I stood there I heard steps and voices. I knew they were coming toward me, and presently I saw Lily emerge from the shade and lean her arms on the low stone wall that fenced the orchard off from the flower-garden. Cyril Kingsley was speaking, and she, with her head bent, appeared to listen earnestly. All at once she put up her hands to her face, and I heard, or fancied that I heard, a low, faint cry.

I took a step forward, and then I paused. He had put his arms about her, and her

head was resting on his breast. I might have heard every word that he spoke, the night and the place were so still, but my ears were dull and my brain was confused. I heard enough to know that she had lost him,—that he could never make her his wife. Another woman would be mistress of King's Court,—before many months, it might be. He spoke fast, and his face in the clear light looked wan and set. There was strong pain stamped on it,—strong pain, and ardent, passionate love.

"O Lily," he cried, when she never raised her head nor spoke in answer to his eager, broken words. "look at me, speak to me! Do I not suffer too? O my love! my love!" Then the little hands went up to his neck and clasped it round.

He tried to comfort her, he tried to comfort himself. He talked long and earnestly. Perhaps some of his words were true; I scarcely heeded them then, and now I do not remember them. I knew one thing only,—my little Lily was suffering, and I, who had my own pain to bear, felt utterly broken down at the sight of hers. Again and again, while he held her close to his heart, he prayed her to speak to him, if only to say she forgave him. At last she raised her face to his. Such a white face it was.

"I do forgive you, Cyril; but I love you. I cannot help it. I shall love you until I die."

The old, tender, faithful promise broke from her in her pain, and stung him.

"No, no, Lily, not that! never say that again!"

She went on, never heeding him.

"You have changed, but I cannot. You may be right. I do not know. Perhaps you will be happier with Beatrice Vaughan than ever I could have made you. She is different from me in every way, but she could not love you more; no living woman can do that."

He laid his cheek against hers in a mute caress, and his pale face worked with pain and sorrow kept sternly down.

"Do you remember when I was Elaine? You told me then that if the true Elaine had looked as I looked then Lancelot could never have gone to Camelot. You were my Lancelot, and I have lost you!"

And then suddenly she burst out into a bitter crying.

I laid my face on the cold, wet leaves, and

a murderous, cruel hate mastered me. For an instant the impulse to spring out upon him and fell him where he stood was almost more than I could control. Then the thought of Lily calmed me; I forced myself to keep still and silent.

"Not now," I said to myself,— "not now, when she is by to pity you and feel for you, shall you answer to me for this; but another time will come, Cyril Kingsley." The thought of how I should wreak my bitter anger upon him when that time came helped me to be patient.

And while I leaned there those two who loved each other tried to say their last goodbye. It was very bitter to both. The strong man faltered and failed, and the words died away on his lips. His face was white and rigid as he stood there trying with all the power of his will to hide his pain.

"I was mad, Lily, cruelly, wickedly mad, when I tempted you to love me; when I met you first, I knew that I was not a free man. But I never dreamed that our parting could be so hard as this."

The words came with a kind of gasp. She tried to stop her crying to listen to him; she looked up into his face with eyes blind with tears.

"I only thought to spend a few happy hours with you,—I thought that because I was an engaged man I could do it with safety to myself,—and I never once dreamed of winning you to love me like—like you do, Lily."

Even then her love soothed him; and I, listening with set teeth, knew that it did.

"But you will forget me in time, I know, and you will forgive me, Lily,—promise. O my darling! my own love! how can I ever leave you or give you up?"

He kissed the white, quivering lips, the wet cheeks, the shining, golden hair.

"But you must leave me, Cyril!" she cried. "Even now you are not mine, but another's. I do forgive you,—you know that I do. Kiss me just once, and then go quickly, while I have strength to let you go."

I hid my face in my hands. It was as if I stood in the presence of the dying and heard the last words that were not meant for me to hear.

I had suffered, rebelled, doubted and trusted, but all these feelings were past. They were stilled into quietness by a dread

reality, — Lily was dying. For days and weeks she had been fading. For her simple soul death had no terrors; she saw only the rest it would bring her.

"I am not sorry to go," she said to me, as I sat by her bedside one night; "yet, if I might, I should have liked to have lived for your sake, Dane."

And then I knew that she understood at the last the love with which I loved her. To me it was as if in the black night of my sorrow a shaft of pure white light had touched my soul and given me strength to endure.

In the deep quiet of that autumn night she died. I heard the last sigh, I caught the last glance of the sweet dark eyes, and then I went out in my dumb sorrow from the hushed room, wishing that from its threshold my strong love had been able to bar out death.

Hours after that, as I sat alone in agony in one of the darkened rooms down-stairs, some one came in softly and touched me on the arm. I was calm enough then, worn out and quiet, for even one's sorrow must rest.

"What is it?" I said wearily. No one answered.

I felt the touch again.

Then I turned my head and saw Cyril Kingsley within a yard of me. I looked up at him in a kind of dull stupor: then memory stirred, and I would have spoken, — have cursed him in my awful bitterness of desolation, — but he put out his hand and stayed me.

"I know all you would say. But even you never loved her as I loved her. Let me see her face once more."

The handsome, haughty face was strained with anguish; even I was touched with pity, seeing him then. Without a word I led him through the quiet house to Lily's little room, where she lay on her bed, dead. There we two who had loved her so stood for an instant side by side, and looked down on her dead face. There were flowers in the wax-white hands; there were buds on the quiet breast; the shaded light fell softly on the tender cheeks; and the fringed eyelids dropped, veined and still, over the darkened eyes. Then the words spoken in hot anger months before came back to me, — "Nothing but death shall come between us!" And, lo, death had come!

Friends we could never be, this false Cyril Kingsley and I, but we dared not be foes. Standing by his side that day, I saw that and submitted. And then I turned from the room and him. He came out as twilight was falling. I saw him face to face as he passed out of the house, but he spoke no word to me nor I to him.

He had loved her, — I never doubted that; but his love had been cruel as the grave, — a poor selfish love at its best. I had loved her, — ah me, how hopelessly! — and now she was dead and gone from us, — dead in her youth and her exceeding great beauty; and yet in my heart she lived. In my poor faithful heart she will ever live, my one white bud of love, pure and stainless, for ever and ever FAIR AS A LILY.

FOR HIS SAKE.

BY MISS ADA CAMBRIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

The sun was setting on a lovely evening in September, shining gloriously over the wide acres of the turf bog that reached, unbroken by tree or mound, to the crimson, blazing horizon of the far west. A mile or so away on the right there was a skirting of dark fir-trees, from behind which a thin line of blue smoke was rising against the sky.

Over the purple heather, glowing rosy in the long level rays of the evening sun, a solitary figure was approaching, walking with the quick, free step of one accustomed to many a long mile. At his heels trotted a couple of liver-and-white pointers, with dejected heads and drooping tails, which were evidently more tired than their master, — a man of about fifty, straight and erect, with grizzled hair, and a face in which time and trouble had furrowed deep lines. He was plainly dressed in a tweed shooting-jacket much the worse for wear. A game bag was slung across his shoulder, which seemed but scantily filled, though he had been out from ten o'clock that morning.

Captain Devereux, whistling softly to himself, stepped swiftly along over the springy, yielding heather.

Half an hour's quick walking brought him to the straight, desolate-looking road, cut right across the bog; and running up, the bank, closely followed by the two dogs, he was about to continue his way in the direction of the blue smoke behind the fir-pines, when his attention was arrested by a group a little in front of him; and, with a slight exclamation, he sprang forward. There had evidently been an accident.

A horse and car lay upon the road, with the helpless look of a general smash; the horse lying prone where he had fallen, the car tilted down, rugs and portmanteaus on the ground, just where they had been pitched, and the car-driver standing helplessly by, leaning over the unfortunate fare, — a gentleman, who lay upon his face, either stunned or dead.

Captain Devereux came hurrying up.

"Hollo! What's happened?"

"Captain, I'm afeared he's dead," replied the carman, turning round.

"Good Heaven! You don't say so?"

Captain Devereux knelt down, and, laying his gun upon the ground, lifted the head of the unconscious form on to his arm, disclosing the face of a man between thirty and forty, with well-cut, handsome features, bearing the unmistakable stamp of high-breeding; he was white to the lips, which were fast closed beneath the heavy brown mustache. Captain Devereux lifted one of the nerveless hands, — the white, well-made hands of a gentleman, — and felt for the pulse. He laid it down again immediately, and replaced the unconscious figure on the ground, with a rug under his head.

"It is a bad business. How did it happen, Micky?"

"Sorra a bit of me knows! We were driving along quite nice and quiet, when the mare she put her foot in a hole, and come down, poor baste! Her leg is broken, I am thinking, sir."

Micky Quin was sorrowfully regarding the old mare, poor black Bess, lying quivering between the shafts, her head on the ground, sobbing, poor thing, with every labored breath.

Captain Devereux had taken a brandy-flask from his pocket, and was trying to pour some of the contents between the prostrate man's tight-locked lips. It only trickled down over his chin and collar, so he gave up the attempt.

"What shall we do, Micky? He is not dead, but how are we to move the poor fellow? I wonder who he is?"

"Sure it's Mr. Bryan! He engaged me to take him to Lisconig from the station."

"Mr. Bryan!" exclaimed Captain Devereux; and he bent with renewed interest over him. "Is it possible? I had no idea he was coming so soon. Are you sure, Micky?"

Micky pointed to the fallen portmanteau and hat-box. The address was right enough, proving the senseless man's identity beyond all doubt, — "Paul Bryan, Esq."

"Micky, you must go to Michael's Mount

for a cart, — every minute lessens his chance, — and tell them to run for the doctor."

"And the mare, sir?" Poor Micky Quin! He thought more of Black Bess than the possible death of the great landowner of the place.

Far away in the distant perspective a cart of turf was slowly approaching.

"Thank goodness!" said Captain Devereux. "Micky, my man, we must put that other horse in the car; and the kindest thing would be to shoot that poor mare."

"You do it then, sir," returned Micky in a choked voice. "I could n't take the life of the poor baste that has served me for ten years. I never thought she'd have done the like. She was sure-footed always; but she'll never rise again, poor cratur!"

Micky turned away while Captain Devereux loaded his gun, — he was unable to witness the death of the favorite he had bought at the Curragh ten years before, — and in another minute Black Bess was at rest forever.

There were tears on Micky's shaggy eyelashes as, without turning round, he walked on to meet the approaching turf-cart, which was drawn by a gaunt, bony chestnut. In a few minutes the chestnut was unyoked from the cart and put between the shafts of the car, and the seemingly lifeless body of Mr. Bryan was lifted on the vehicle. Captain Devereux, supporting him, with the heavy head resting on his shoulder, wondered if he was dead. The white face and tight-closed eyes looked like death indeed. The man who belonged to the turf-cart remained in charge of the cart and the body of poor Black Bess. Micky walked at the chestnut's head, leading it carefully.

Captain Devereux had decided on taking Mr. Bryan to his own place, Michael's Mount, — Lisconig being six good Irish miles away; and in a very short time they had reached the fir-trees, and stopped at a small two-storied house standing on a slight eminence, from which it had taken its name.

Several dogs came barking down to the gate, — tall, meagre-looking hounds. They bounded round the car and sniffed Micky suspiciously, as he led the bony chestnut carefully up to the door.

"Dulcie! Dulcie!" shouted Captain Devereux, and the door was opened by a pretty gray-eyed little maiden.

"O papa!" she cried, her young face turn-

ing white and red in her surprise, as she looked with scared eyes at the prostrate figure lifted down from the car.

"Don't make a fuss, Dulcie! It is Mr. Bryan of Lisconig. There has been an accident. Get my room ready for him, child, — quick!"

Dulcie obeyed without another question, just taking one look at the pale face hanging over her father's arm, ere she sped away upstairs.

Mr. Bryan was a tall, well-built man, — no light load; and he was with difficulty got upstairs and laid on Captain Devereux's bed, still insensible.

"Now, for Heaven's sake, Micky, go for Doctor Donovan, and bring him back with you!"

But this was a case beyond the skill of old Doctor Donovan; and Mr. Bryan was quite too important a person to be allowed to perish, if money could procure brains and skill to save him. So Micky was sent off again, in the Doctor's gig, to the nearest post-town, six miles off, with a telegram for the first doctor in Dublin to come immediately to a case of life and death. And by the night-mail the celebrated medical man arrived, and nearly killed Doctor Donovan's horse in driving to Michael's Mount.

Mr. Bryan did not die, but returned to consciousness, or, rather, to a state that was a little less like death.

"How is he, papa?" Dulcie asked, as her father came down-stairs at last.

"They'll pull him through, poor fellow, — he had a narrow shave of it, — but he can't be moved."

"Must he stay here, papa?"

Dulcie, sitting opposite her father in the small, dimly lighted parlor, opened her eyes as she spoke.

"Of course: we must do the best we can for him. It's a responsibility; but I wish he had a mother, or some relative, to send for."

"Has he no one at all?"

"Not a soul! His uncle, old Mr. Bryan, was the last of the Bryans, bar the poor fellow up-stairs: a fine, handsome man he is too."

"Yes," came in a low, grave voice from the little figure sitting with small hands folded on her lap; and in that "Yes" Dulcie Devereux, though she was unconscious of it, gave all the rest of her life into the keeping

of the pale face which she had had one glimpse of.

"I suppose he was coming to Lisconig for good?" said Captain Devereux.

"I suppose so," echoed Dulcie, who was listening to the footsteps of the doctors overheard.

She looked pale and tired.

"Go to bed, child," said Captain Devereux.

"And where are you going to sleep, papa?" she asked, pausing after her good-night kiss.

"Anywhere; I must look after him."

Dulcie went up-stairs, and in the moonlight, in her own room, she knelt down, and prayed that the sufferer might live.

Poor little Dulcie! Her seventeen years of experience had brought her nothing so wonderful as the advent of this handsome stranger, who had been carried like one dead, and laid beneath their roof. For thirteen years she had lived a strange, uneventful life with her father at Michael's Mount, shut up with the companionship of her own heart, and dreaming the days and weeks and years away, with vague wonderings and yearnings about an impossible future.

They knew nobody. Living in this strange little out-of-the-way house, no one took the trouble to find out anything about them; and Captain Devereux was somewhat of a mystery to the neighborhood. Who he was no one knew, and what motive had made him bury himself in the wilds none could tell. Captain Devereux lived very quietly, and in his own way educated and brought up his daughter himself. He had one son, older by several years than Dulcie, who had occasionally paid brief visits to Michael's Mount, and had finally emigrated to Australia.

For three weeks Paul Bryan lay dangerously ill, pausing for many days on the border of the strange shadowy land, unconscious of small white hands that ministered to him, or that, as he struggled back to life, great pitying gray eyes were looking at him out of a delicate, child-like face.

Dulcie, sitting watching him one day, noting the ravages brain-fever had made in the strong, manly face, saw his eyelids tremble, and then two puzzled, wondering eyes looked at her, — deep blue eyes, that wandered from Dulcie to his own thin white hand, and back to her again.

"Where the deuce am I?" he asked, in a low voice, very weak.

At the oddness of the question a smile crept into Dulcie's eyes. She got up, and held a glass to his lips.

"You were to take this when you woke," she said.

He took it obediently, and turned his face wearily on the pillow.

"I've been ill?" he asked.

"Yes, very ill," said Dulcie, thinking it better to satisfy his curiosity. "Your car upset, and papa brought you here."

"When?"

"Three weeks ago. But you are not to talk."

And, weary with the great weariness and exhaustion of illness, he closed his eyes again, and fell asleep.

"He is saved!" thought Dulcie, tears filling her eyes. "Thank Heaven!"

The leaves were falling fast before Mr. Bryan was able to leave his room; but one evening he struck against being an invalid any longer, and came down-stairs leaning heavily on Captain Devereux's shoulder.

The small parlor looked snug and homelike when he entered. Tea was laid on a little round table, and Dulcie — a red ribbon twisted in her soft brown hair — was kneeling on the hearth-rug, toasting bread. A large arm-chair was by the fire, full of rugs and pillows.

"Oh, I protest against this!" said Mr. Bryan in his low, pleasant voice. "I really won't be an invalid any longer." But all the same he seemed glad to lie back in the arm-chair, and looked around at the bright little room, and at Dulcie, with her sweet, serious eyes looking out from under the sweeping dark lashes that added such beauty to her face.

"You are spoiling me, Dulcie," he said, as she brought him his tea and buttered his toast, putting it all on a little table at his side. "What a good little nurse you are!" he added, taking her warm hand in his for a second.

A hot blush dyed her face: she drew away her hand, and said gayly, —

"Now you have come down-stairs I won't spoil you any more."

"Won't you? I assure you I like being spoiled."

Dulcie — a smile on her lips — stooped to pat one of the dogs. Mr. Bryan looked on

smiling too. She was such a soft, winning little creature, with her great shy eyes, and had such quaint, childish ideas. The fire-light flashed and caught the bright ribbon in her hair, — the only scrap of brightness about the slight little figure. Dulcie's wardrobe was not very extensive, and this red ribbon was an unusual bit of finery, put on in honor of Mr. Bryan's first night downstairs.

"Do you think the doctors will let me go to Lisconig next week?" said Mr. Bryan, as, tea over, he was trying his strength, walking up and down the room. "I have put you all out awfully; moreover, I am anxious to get over to Lisconig to begin my reign there."

"Don't talk of putting us out," returned Captain Devereux heartily. "We are only too glad to have you as long as you can stay with us; and, really, you are n't fit to move yet."

"Thanks,—you are very kind; but I know a sick man is a bore. My little nurse must be tired of humoring me."

He came up, and was standing behind Dulcie's chair, and did not see the blank change that had come over her face at mention of his departure.

"Tell the truth," he said: "won't you be glad to get rid of me?"

How thankful she was to be able to do the slightest thing for him Dulcie did not say, and she did not answer for a moment; then she said slowly, —

"I do not think it trouble."

"Dulcie looks upon you very much as she did on the Newfoundland who broke his leg last summer, you see," laughed Captain Devereux.

"If she treated the Newfoundland half as well as she has treated me, he must have been well off, Captain Devereux," said Mr. Bryan, wheeling round suddenly. "While I live I shall never forget what you have done for me."

"Nonsense! Sit down: you know you are n't fit to move yet."

Mr. Bryan went back to his chair.

"How my uncle neglected Lisconig!" he said. "I believe the property is worth twice as much,—only there are bad tenants."

"Yes: old Mr. Bryan was too easy a landlord. He lowered all the rents at the famine; and now, when the farmers are well able to pay, the land is all underlet."

"And some of the fellows pay no rent at all, I understand."

"Likely enough; and you will find it hard to make them."

"I mean to try, at all events; when I come to Lisconig for good, you will see a different place."

"Don't put the screw on at once; these Irish chaps don't understand it."

"They won't be asked," said Mr. Bryan quietly.

Determination was written in every line of Paul Bryan's face; the tenants on the Lisconig estates were to find they had a very different man to deal with from old Mr. Bryan, who had not cared one straw what became of the property as long as he got enough out of it to last him his lifetime.

"Would n't you be afraid, Mr. Bryan?" Dulcie asked, with grave questioning tones, and a look of awe on her face.

"Afraid?" The dark blue eyes meeting hers had never known fear yet. "That is the last idea that would enter my head."

"But if the poor people can't pay?"

"They must go then; have n't I the best right to my own? Let them emigrate."

"If they got fond of you first," suggested Dulcie, thinking how easy it was to love and worship him.

"They might pay their rents, you think? No, Dulcie, I don't allow there is much that is lovable in the Irish peasant."

All Dulcie's patriotism leaped into her eyes at his words.

"Mr. Bryan, you are an Irishman yourself; you ought not to speak so unkindly of your countrymen. Some of them are very faithful; but, if you tyrannize over them, poor ignorant people! can you wonder?" —

"They shoot you from behind a hedge? Not a bit of it! Dulcie, you are a capital little champion; I wish I had you on my side. Mine will be a reign of terror at Lisconig. The tenants will tremble before King Bryan the Terrible!" He laughed as he spoke.

"I think you will be a very cruel landlord, Mr. Bryan," said Dulcie.

"No, I hope not. I mean to do my duty, but I also mean that they shall do theirs; don't you think that is fair?"

"I suppose so; but you speak as if you would be a hard master."

"Dulcie would rule by love," said Captain Devereux, smiling fondly at her. But Mr. Bryan declared some natures did not understand love.

"I will try my plan first," he said, looking with amused eyes at Dulcie; "and then, if that fails, I can try yours," he added, little thinking how bitterly he was to remember words spoken with such careless gayety. Dulcie, her hand on Don's head, which was resting on her knee, lifted her eyes to Mr. Bryan's amused face.

"My plan never fails; yours might," she said.

"Any plan of yours is sure of success," he answered; smiling at the grave little maiden, whose shy eyes drooped so readily beneath his gaze.

Poor little Dulcie! In all her life she had never seen any one like this well-dressed, perfect gentleman. It was small wonder then that she opened the flood-gates of all the passionate love that was in her nature, and cast love, worship—all—down at this man's feet. The few weeks she had known him seemed to have given to her life all that was wanting. Just to sit by and hear him talk was all she asked; for to listen to the voice whose tones had become music to her ear was enough for her; and that such happiness might all come to an end never for a moment entered her mind.

"We must be friends always, you and I," Mr. Bryan said one day. "I owe my life to you."

"No, — to Dr. Donovan," she corrected, with a droll little smile lurking in her eyes and about her tremulous lips. "Old Dr. Donovan is so proud of the way he pulled you through." He laughed with her. "And Micky Quin has been here every day to ask for your 'honor,'" she added.

"It's very kind of him," he said.

"Yes," went on Dulcie. "And he says the horse you gave him is a better goer, but not so cheerful as Black Bess."

"Poor, Black Bess! she had n't much go in her," Mr. Bryan laughed; "but I think the best thing was when I said, 'I suppose I am answerable for the horse?' Mr. Quin answered, with abject humility, 'Is it for me breaking your honor's head? Sir, I have it in your hands.'"

Mr. Bryan was laughing at the recollection of the scene; a good hearty laugh, that told of returning health. Dulcie looked at him with shining eyes.

"I should like somebody to know you," he said suddenly, a new expression coming over his face. "Dulcie, I will tell you some day."

What was he to tell her but one thing. Her lashes swept her crimson cheeks. Mr. Bryan never noticed her confusion; he was looking with soft, dreamy eyes at the autumnal landscape. And then he commenced talking of all his plans, all he meant to do for the future at Lisconig, Dulcie drinking in every word, with a blind devotion to the speaker that was little short of adoration.

They were together all day and every day. Captain Devereux, who was not without ambitious thoughts for his daughter, left them pretty much to their own society — and Dulcie was in paradise.

CHAPTER II.

"I must go tomorrow," said Mr. Bryan.

Over Dulcie's fair face swept the shadow of a great change. With eyes suddenly full of a great dumb pain she looked out over the acres of waving heather that were growing dim in the afternoon shadows.

"Going away!"

"You must come and see Lisconig some day," Mr. Bryan added, — "when I get it all done up; six miles need not separate us altogether."

"No," assented Dulcie, bravely steadying her voice. And they walked on in silence for a little time.

"I am going to get a whole army of painters to transform Lisconig. The glimpse I had of it once, one day I ran down to see my uncle, was not exactly favorable."

Dulcie heard him, but answered not. They were walking together by the wide heathy bog, at the close of a dull afternoon. Mr. Bryan was hardly strong again yet, and walked feebly. As they turned in at the gate of Michael's Mount, he leaned his head heavily upon Dulcie's slight shoulder.

"It is hardly fair, Dulcie, making a walking-stick of you."

"I ought not to have allowed you to walk so far."

"Why, after tomorrow, I mean to ride every day, when you won't be by to take me to task. Heigh ho! It will be uncommonly lonely, at Lisconig, I imagine. Don't be surprised if I should ride over here pretty often."

"We shall always give you a welcome," answered the soft shy tones.

"Heaven bless you, child, for all your care!" he said in a low deep voice. "Heaven

knows, just before I came here, I valued my life little enough."

Mr. Bryan little knew how his words were misinterpreted. He was thinking of other scenes and faces; and Dulcie, lost in the happiness of the present, dreamed that he loved her.

Paul Bryan, in the room that had been given to him at Michael's Mount, gazing with loving eyes at a photograph of a woman's face, and laying his lips upon it reverently, little dreamed that Dulcie was lying wide awake in her bed, thinking of every word he had uttered that day, dreaming over the palace of happiness he had unwittingly built up stone by stone.

"Dulcie, will you wear this in remembrance of your patient?"

Mr. Bryan had a small leather case open in his hand, and lying on the white satin inside was a gold locket set in pearls. In all her life Dulcie had never seen anything half so lovely. She gave a little childish cry of surprise and delight, her face crimsoning with pleasure.

"Oh, Mr. Bryan," she exclaimed, with radiant eyes, "it is too lovely!"

"I am glad you like it. May I fasten the chain around your neck?" And he clasped the little gold chain, Dulcie flushing and trembling, and faltering out her thanks. "It came only this morning," he added. "I sent to a friend in London to choose it for me."

"I shall be afraid to wear it," said Dulcie. "I have never seen anything so beautiful." "See!" laughed Mr. Bryan. "Here is a place at the back of the locket to put somebody's likeness by and by."

The hot blood rushed to her face; her eyes fell.

"Dulcie, Dulcie," he said, "if you were a fashionable young lady and I had made that remark, you would not have blushed so charmingly." And Dulcie turned away with eyes that had grown wet.

Half the pleasure of the locket was gone; for the carriage from Lisonig was at the door to take her hero away.

Captain Devereux was out busying himself with the luggage. Mr. Bryan turned to say good-by, and took Dulcie's hand in both of his.

"It is only half a good-by," he said, "for you must come and see me very soon; and remember — friends always, Dulcie."

"Yes," she whispered, her heart full of the one fact that he was going away.

There was more than hero-worship in the eyes that looked up for one brief second to his. But his heart was full of something else, and he saw only the childish quivering face, and realized, in a dim, brotherly sort of way, that she was sorry to see him go; and, with a sudden impulse to comfort and befriend the kind heart who had been so good to him, he stooped and laid his lips on her forehead — a kiss that he would have given if the girl had been at his side whose face represented on cold cardboard he had kissed so passionately.

"Heaven bless you, Dulcie! good-by!" he said; and he was gone, little thinking that that light caress had burnt into her soul.

Dulcie, sitting out on the lonely bog that afternoon, the pearl locket in her hand, weeping as if her heart would break, never dreamed that she was to shed tears of misery compared to which the present trouble was happiness.

Mr. Bryan kept his word, and rode over pretty often to Michael's Mount. He was lonely, he said, in the great house by himself.

Dulcie counted the days and hours he was away, and watched with eager, longing eyes for his horse's head to appear over the gate.

Mr. Bryan was transforming Lisonig, as he had said, — building a beautiful conservatory off one of the drawing-rooms, getting the whole house repainted and fitted up, and laying out gardens and pleasure-grounds, the old ones having gone to rack and ruin in his uncle's time.

Mr. Bryan was not a favorite amongst his tenants. They had had their own way too long to approve of a reformation of any kind, even if it led to draining the land and building new cottages; and black looks followed him as he rode over the farms, casting his bold eyes here and there, making himself master of his own, not caring one straw that some of the tenants cursed him as he rode by. He was a man to go his own way and attain his object through thick and thin, no matter what any one thought to the contrary.

The Lodge of Lisonig was a real eyesore to him. It was inhabited by a lazy, idle man with a wife and a tribe of dirty children,

standing mostly bare-headed and shoeless inside the wide grand old-fashioned iron gate. Mr. Bryan quietly put out these old retainers of his uncle's, and had the lodge painted and done up for the new lodge-keeper, — an old pensioner and his wife. It was the first act on the part of the new landlord that, in its arbitrary character, condemned him utterly.

"It must be all the same to you, Keenan," he said to the lodge-keeper. "I will let you have another house and a bit of land for a year, rent free, till you get on a bit. You see I can't have a lot of children about."

Keenan, a surly, ill-looking individual, muttered as Mr. Bryan rode away, —

"What did for the ould Mr. Bryan might do for the likes of you. Maybe you'll be sorry for it yet." With which he turned away with a great and bitter hatred at his heart. "Is it pay rint, when I've had the lodge for five year and more? Sorra a bit!"

The pensioner was established, and the Keenan family betook themselves, with very hard feelings against their landlord, to the cottage assigned to them, and, for the present, nothing seemed to have resulted from the act.

One gloomy afternoon Mr. Bryan, arriving at Michael's Mount, found Dulcie alone by herself, sitting busy knitting socks for her father. After the first greeting, he sat silent and watched her knitting-needles twinkling and flashing in the firelight.

"I am going to England tomorrow," he said suddenly. "I am going over for a ball."

"A ball!" echoed Dulcie, lifting her gray eyes, and ignoring the fact of his going away because she could not bring herself to speak of it. "What is a ball like?" she asked.

"Well, that is rather a hard question," laughed Mr. Bryan; "there are balls and balls. As a rule, I think they are very stupid affairs. You meet the people you want to avoid, and never those you have come expressly to have the pleasure of dancing with. They are all vanity and vexation of spirit; and, Dulcie, you may be glad you can say you have never been at one, for, as a rule, they are disappointing."

"Then why are you going?" she asked.

"This ball is the exception; if it was twice as far, I should be there."

Dulcie sat silent, in imagination seeing lovely lighted rooms, and hearing soft music, and beholding visions of fair women and brave men floating past to sweet strains.

"Dulcie," — Paul Bryan's voice had changed since he spoke last, — "I came over to tell you something this afternoon." Dulcie's heart was beating painfully in the twilight; she bent her head still lower over the knitting that trembled in her hands. "I am going to be married."

He never knew how those six words of his cut through the warm beating heart, bearing death to all hope; how in one moment he had taken all joy out of Dulcie's life forever. When she looked up, there was only a sort of surprise in her face, though she knew she would never care for anything in this world again. She never winced. Only one thing remained, — to hide her love from him; never to let him know.

"Aren't you going to congratulate me, Dulcie?" he asked.

She held out both her hands.

"I hope you will be very happy, Mr. Bryan," she said quietly.

"Thank you," he returned.

The hands he held were cold as ice. The increasing darkness hid her face, where the misery was finding its way now.

"I want you to love my wife," he was saying. "Dulcie, she will bless you for saving my life."

There was no answer. Dulcie sat as if turned to stone; and he, blinded by his own happiness, never noticed her silence, but told her, in low, loving tones, — the tones that always crept into his voice when he spoke of his love, — of the fair girl who was to be mistress of Lisconig. Dulcie set her teeth hard, and kept her face away. "Heaven help me!" she almost moaned out in her pain. Dreamily, with a keen sense of mental agony, she heard his voice telling her of the ball that was to be on this girl's birthday, and that he had promised her faithfully to be there; and into his voice had come such a ring of happiness, such accents of proud, fond tenderness, that Dulcie, listening, felt as if her heart must break if he spoke more.

Mr. Bryan rode back to Lisconig that evening humming gayly to himself, thinking how soon he was to see his own true love again, picturing to himself how, in the future, when he should be coming home, there would be a dear face and kind words to greet and welcome him at his own fireside; while Dulcie was looking, with eyes burning with unshed tears, at the locket set in pearls, — his present that meant nothing,

after all. Presently she laid her sad lips upon it as tenderly as one might kiss the face of the dead, and locked it up; for it could mean only pain and sorrow to her now.

CHAPTER III.

Dressed for the ball that was to celebrate her coming of age, Lillian Oswald stood in her room, before her toilet-table, in the blaze of wax-lights, her maid clasping the bracelets on her round white arms.

Miss Oswald, the heiress, was looking her fairest and best, arrayed in all her bravery of white silk and cloudy net, with sprays of silver ivy wreathing it up. The glass reflected back a fair girlish face with large brown eyes and bright golden hair. Lillian carried her head proudly, with an air half haughty and wholly graceful; and the brown eyes looked back with a bright smile into their own reflection.

"That will do, Hester. You may go now."

Miss Oswald, left alone, took a white rosebud from out a glass of water, and blushing brightly, with a tender lingering touch, fastened it in her dress. The rosebud had arrived that morning in a little box from Ireland,—the sweetest present that had come to her on her birthday; for she knew it had been picked by a hand she loved from a tree that grew in her future home. That one tiny rosebud that struggled late into bloom in one of the green-houses of Lisconig told of all the love and thoughtfulness of the sender. And he was to be at the ball this evening.

"Are you ready, Lillian?" said a voice.

"Yes, mamma."

Mrs. Oswald, in all the glory of black velvet, and the family diamonds flashing on throat, head, and arms, with a critical eye surveyed her only daughter from head to foot; then she spied the rosebud, and her face changed.

"I wish, Lillian, you had more sense."

"How, mamma?"

"You know what I mean, dear,—going back, after all, and renewing that foolish engagement. You have disappointed us all very much."

Lillian lifted her eyes to her mother's face.

"Mamma, you know I did try to please you and papa, but I could n't forget Paul."

"Yes, and told him so foolishly, when we were flattering ourselves it was all over. Not that I object to Paul Bryan personally; but I hate to think of my only child burying herself in Ireland."

"Mamma, would n't you rather I was happy in Ireland than miserable anywhere else?"

Lillian was drawing on her gloves as she spoke, thinking of the warm, true heart she loved so dearly; as dearly, as passionately, as poor little Dulcie, whose sorrow was eating its way into her fresh young life.

Mrs. Oswald made no answer to her daughter's last remark, her idea of happiness being very different from Lillian's, who, after obediently breaking off with Paul, and suffering herself to be tacitly engaged to Sir Geoffrey Slade, had met Paul Bryan one day face to face alone at a friend's house, at a time when he did not care what happened to him, for she had given him up; and Lillian, after one glance from his reproachful eyes, had committed the very extraordinary act of bursting into tears and sobbing out, "Paul, Paul, I couldn't help it! It is as bad for me as you!"

After that confession, it was not to be wondered that Paul took her into his strong arms, and said nothing should separate them.

CHAPTER IV.

"Lillian, you don't know how I have looked forward to this!"

It was Paul Bryan and Miss Oswald's first dance together; and Lillian, bright and smiling, raised her eyes to his.

"I knew you would come, Paul."

"The next time I come I won't go back alone," he whispered, his strong face, very loving and tender, smiling down into her own.

Later that evening they were together again. Lillian, as queen of the evening, was in great request, and bore her honors with a smiling face, conscious of a pair of fond eyes that, with proud tenderness, followed her every movement, but she gave Paul one more dance.

"Tell me all about Dulcie Devereux," she said, as they were sitting together on a sofa. "What is she like, Paul?"

"She is the best little thing in the world," he answered warmly; "so pretty and child-

like! I hope you will be very fond of her, Lily."

"You are!" asserted Lillian, with a saucy glance up at him. "I am jealous, Paul," she continued, looking down at her hand, where a diamond ring gleamed that had not been there before, — Paul's birthday present.

"Are you jealous, Lillian?" he asked, taking her words half seriously.

"No, Paul, — only jealous that some one else should have watched over and taken care of you."

"You would n't have made half so good a nurse as my little Dulcie."

"I will love her because she was good to you, Paul," whispered Lillian.

Paul laid his hand with a swift brief pressure on hers.

"One more turn before this waltz is over."

As they moved off he bent over the fair head near his shoulder, —

"I want you all for myself, Lillian. When will you come home, darling?"

Lillian whispered a shy reply; and they took their place in the crowd on the polished floor. For those two, at least, this ball contained no disappointment.

When Lillian laid by her bracelets that night, or rather early next morning, she put away the faded rosebud, to keep forever in recollection of a night that contained no sting in the memory of its perfect happiness.

Mr. Bryan was home again. His visit to England had been very brief.

It was late on Saturday night when he arrived; and on Sunday morning he went to the little country church, with its high windows and glaring white-washed walls, — a gloomy building where footsteps echoed dismally with a hollow, empty sound.

Mr. Bryan, surveying the scantily filled seats, saw Dulcie sitting with bent head; and when he saw her face he started. She looked as if she had been ill; her face was drawn and white. Never once did her eyes stray in his direction; with persistent gravity the dark lashes rested on her cheeks. Paul Bryan, furtively regarding the sad, quiet little figure, wondered what had happened at Michael's Mount to rob Dulcie's bright childish face of its happiness. He waited outside the church door till she came out.

"Have you been ill, Dulcie?" he asked kindly.

Her cheeks were scarlet now.

"Only a cold," she answered hastily, — "nothing to signify."

"You don't look very well," he persisted. "You quite frightened me!"

"It is n't anything, really," — a tone of distress in her voice; and then, with a little effort, "How did you enjoy your visit to England?"

"Quite as much as I expected. The next time I go, Dulcie, I shall bring back my wife."

Dulcie, walking by his side, kept her head bent down.

"I was telling Lillian about you," he went on; "she is longing to know you, Dulcie."

"I don't think we shall be here," Dulcie answered in a hard voice. "Papa had a letter from Harry; and he is getting on so well in Australia that he wants us to go out to him in the spring."

"But surely you would never think of it?"

"Yes: papa seems to like the idea."

"But would you like it?"

"I don't care."

Dulcie's eyes were looking straight before her.

Paul Bryan wondered what had taken all the life out of her face, and decided the reason in his own mind.

"Dulcie," he said suddenly, "you sha'n't bury yourself in Australia. You must live with Lillian and me till you get a home of your own."

Dulcie conquered her agitation before she answered, —

"You are very kind, Mr. Bryan; but you quite mistake me. I would much rather go with papa."

Never an inkling of the truth crossed his mind. Later that day he showed her Lillian's likeness in a locket that he wore. Dulcie looked quietly at the bright face and smiling brown eyes of the girl who had all that the world could give.

"She is very pretty," she said gravely.

"This does n't do her half justice," Mr. Bryan declared. "She is miles too good for me, Dulcie. By the by," he said presently, "some of these jovial tenants of mine are showing their teeth. I have had no less than three letters containing notices of immediate destruction, — all from the same quarter, I suspect."

Dulcie turned white, and looked up at him with scared eyes.

"What will you do?"

"Do nothing, — certainly not show that I am afraid of them! Dulcie, what a child you are! I do believe you are trembling!"

So she was, — shaking from head to foot, with quivering lips.

CHAPTER V.

It was two or three days after, — a dull, lowering morning, with heavy showers at intervals. Nevertheless Dulcie set off for a long, lonely walk. Her father had gone out snipe-shooting immediately after breakfast; and Dulcie, finding her own thoughts anything but pleasant companionship, went out too into the cold, raw air.

Over the damp, desolate bog, heedless, in her dull misery, that it was wet and sodden under foot, Dulcie walked on, finding after all that her thoughts kept pace with her. A heavier shower than usual drove her for shelter into an old disused tumble-down cabin that had once been inhabited by some turf-cutters. There were holes in the roof, and water came splashing through, making a pool in the middle of the floor.

Dulcie shivered and went to the door, thinking, after all, that the heavy pitiless rain was better than the damp desolation of this shelter. In the distance she saw two men approaching, and stepped back again to wait till they had passed. But in about ten minutes their voices were close to the cabin, — they were evidently making for the same shelter as herself.

Dulcie, with a sudden fear, darted into the one other room the cottage boasted, to wait, unseen, till the men had taken their departure. She heard them stamping with their heavy boots, and trembled; for in one of the speakers she recognized Keenan, the man Mr. Bryan had ejected from the Lodge. All of a sudden a white, awful change came over the girl's face, and she was straining every nerve not to lose a word of the conversation, which was carried on in low, guttural tones.

Half an hour afterward the two men emerged from the cabin, one of them carrying a gun; and they separated, striking off in different directions across the bog. But not till they were out of sight did Dulcie leave her hiding-place; and then she started

running, with white face and great fear-haunted eyes, all the while, as she ran, forming a plan to defeat the crime she had heard planned. Mr. Bryan was known to be driving home alone from the town that afternoon; and in the dusk, at a particular part of the road, he was to be shot.

Dulcie wrung her hands together in despair. She felt sure that, if Mr. Bryan knew they were there lying in wait, he would drive on just the same, trusting to the fellow being probably a coward and a wretched shot. He had said as much many a time.

Dulcie reached home, and went up-stairs, pale and resolute now.

"I will save him!" she sobbed out, with just one burst of weeping.

After putting on a black dress and jacket, she was going out again with feverish haste; but, just as she was leaving the room, she turned and unlocked her little desk. With shaking hands she clasped Paul Bryan's locket around her neck, her lips quivering piteously. Poor little Dulcie! Truly she loved him with the love that was her doom.

Swiftly she ran down-stairs, the pearl locket lying cold and chill against her neck. Don came bounding from the yard, eager to accompany her; but Dulcie sent him back. Stooping, she kissed him on the forehead.

"Good-by, Don!" she said, with a little sob, and then resolutely shut the gate, and started, weary and tired, on her mission to save Paul Bryan's life.

It was past two o'clock now; and when the afternoon shadows were falling the deed was to be done. Dulcie had to take a long round to avoid the hill behind the hedge of which Keenan was crouching.

The few people crossing the fields wondered at the pale little face that just looked piteously into theirs and then plodded steadily on. Once a gentleman, coming home with dogs and gun, offered to assist her over a high bank. Dulcie, with the same steadfast, resolute look, accepted his offer, sprang into his outstretched arms, and, gravely thanking him, went on her way. He would not soon forget the strange look in her eyes; it haunted him all that evening.

With almost calmness Dulcie walked on, mile after mile, hardly feeling the increasing weariness. There was no terror or excitement in her eyes, when, in the twilight of the wintry afternoon, the sound of a

horse's tread approaching told her that Mr. Bryan was coming at last. The dog-cart swung round the corner; Paul Bryan was sitting in it, smoking. Dulcie stepped out into the middle of the road, and called his name.

With an exclamation of surprise, he drew the horse up with a jerk.

"Dulcie! What brings you here, child, so far from home?"

"Will you please drive me home?" she asked tremulously.

"You need hardly have asked that," Mr. Bryan laughed. "What made you walk so far alone? Were n't you afraid?"

"No: who would touch me?"

"No one, I hope; but don't try the experiment again. Dulcie, I would n't trust Erin's sons so implicitly."

He had with nimble dexterity jumped down from the dog-cart and given her his hand to help her up.

"May I drive?" Dulcie asked. "Please let me."

"If you like," he answered, glad to see that her spirits were coming back; "but don't deposit us in the ditch."

The long shadows were falling fast; the rain had long since ceased; the clouds were all banked up to the north, heavy, sombre, and appalling. Mr. Bryan was enveloped in a long, thick driving-coat. He took it off, and Dulcie, laughing, allowed him to put it on her, and thrust her arms into the sleeves.

"You will never find your hands again," he said. "Here, take the reins. How do you like being perched up so high?"

Dulcie looked over the dark hedge, and shivered.

"Is there no other road home, Mr. Bryan?"

"No. Intimate to that animal that we wish to advance, if you please."

He leaned back, looking up at her with amused eyes.

"Don't drive so fast," he said presently; for Dulcie was keeping the horse at rather a reckless pace.

It was getting very dark now, but the moon was rising, white and silvery.

"We shall have the moon presently," remarked Mr. Bryan, "to light us on our winding way. May I smoke?"

"Of course; I like it," Dulcie answered, without turning round.

"Do you often walk so far by yourself?"

he asked again, when his cigar was fairly alight.

Dulcie did not say that she had never walked alone on this road before, so many miles from Michael's Mount, but answered enigmatically, —

"I like walking."

"And driving — you like that too?"

"Yes."

He did not know that the small hands grasping the reins were numb and chill, but not with cold. Dulcie never thought she was doing a brave or heroic act; she was only answering the instinct of her woman's heart. Every fall of the horse's foot was bringing her inch by inch nearer to the end.

"What are you thinking of?" her companion asked sullenly.

Dulcie laughed, though she was far enough from any feelings of mirth at that moment; but she was determined not to let him suspect anything from her manner.

"I am thinking," she said, "that you must walk up this long hill."

"I am too comfortable," he replied; "and that big brute is capable of dragging us both up a mountain."

Stretching in front of them was the long white road, steep and straight, with a sloping bank on the left, and to the right a thick thorn-hedge, with broken gaps here and there. Dulcie drew up at the foot of the hill.

"You must get down, Mr. Bryan" — speaking playfully, though never in all her life had she been so terribly in earnest as then. "I want to drive all by myself, please."

Mr. Bryan looked at her; but she was smiling gayly, and never a suspicion crossed his mind that beneath her playful, imperious request lay a more urgent reason. Laughing, he scrambled down, and commenced the long, weary ascent, walking beside the dog-cart, Dulcie carefully keeping it between him and the hedge.

Whiter and whiter grew her face. She shook and trembled under the great frieze coat. But the man whose life she was to save never saw the agony in her eyes or heard the one sobbed-out whisper, "Heaven help me to be brave!" He was singing as he walked along, in his rich voice, and when he stopped his song Dulcie asked him to go on.

It was quite dark now, save for the moon,

which was shining and casting long level shadows across the road. Mr. Bryan, looking up suddenly, saw the agony on the girl's face. Even in the moonlight its expression of terror and endurance struck him. But before he spoke the moment had come. A shot rang through the air, and a cry, — not from Dulcie, but from Paul Bryan, — sounded through the stillness of the night. Springing forward, Paul grasped the reins and checked the terrified horse; and then he caught the swaying, tottering figure, and held her in his arms.

"Dulcie, speak, for Heaven's sake! Are you hurt?"

"Drive on!" she gasped. "They may come!"

Over the fields, in the white moonlight, two men were running; their work was done, and they were flying now from detection. They heard the thunder of hoofs and rumble of wheels, and thought that it was Mr. Bryan's horse running away, little guessing that their hated landlord was alive and unharmed, saved by a girl's love.

The distance to Lisconig was not great; but to Paul Bryan it seemed an age before he turned in at the gates and swept up the avenue; for something told him that the life was ebbing out of the speechless form encircled by his arm. The door of Lisconig was opened as the household heard the sound of wheels proclaiming the master's return home; and then white, scared servants were crowding round, and Mr. Bryan was carrying Dulcie through the hall into the warm lighted dining-room.

In two or three hasty words he told all, and sent for Dr. Donovan and Captain Devereux. But, when he looked at Dulcie's face, — so awfully white and wan from pain and loss of blood, — he sent more messengers after the first, to bid them lose not a second if they would not be too late. Then he came and knelt down by the sofa, and held wine to her lips.

"You must be brave, Dulcie. Please Heaven, you are only slightly hurt."

The large eyes, dilated with a strange excitement, were lifted to his.

"It is for death," she whispered; and then her glance wandered to the servants standing near, watching with sympathetic curiosity. "Please tell them not to look at me."

Mr. Bryan told them to go, shut the door himself, and came back to the sofa.

"My poor little Dulcie, if I could have saved you this!" he said in broken tones. "It was meant for me; and" —

"Hush!" The wondrous eyes were lifted again. "Don't fret; you will live and be happy with her."

"And you will live too," he said, trying to smile. "I have telegraphed for the same doctor, Dulcie, who did such wonders for me. Nay, dear, you must not despond."

Dulcie laid her white, chill hand on his.

"I shall be dead before he comes;" and then she fell to weeping. "Saved! saved! Oh, I shall die happy now!"

The broken words, — something in the dying face, — told him the truth at last. With a great choking sob he bent his head.

"Did you save me, Dulcie?"

Standing at death's portal, Dulcie answered, low and soft, stating the simple fact with no shame in the confession now, "I loved you!"

"O child! I never dreamed of this."

In all his life never had Paul Bryan endured such mental agony as now; not even when Lillian had given him up, and all his life had seemed blackness, had he suffered one-tenth of the anguish and regret that he was enduring now, kneeling, with his face hidden, by the girl who had given her life for his sake.

"Dulcie," he cried, "who was I that you should have made such an awful sacrifice for me?"

And he lifted his face, white with feeling, and looked down into the eyes that were dim with the last tears she would ever shed.

"Lift me higher," she said faintly. "Paul, you need never blame yourself, — you could n't help it."

The poor little childish words brought the scalding tears to his eyes; he had never wept for Lillian, but he sobbed with a man's bitterness now over the white face lying on his shoulder.

"Don't cry; it pains me so. Mr. Bryan, will you make me a promise?"

"What is it?"

"Promise me to make your people love you. Don't be hard on them."

"I promise; though Heaven knows it will be hard to be kind to them now."

Death was not far off. Paul, looking down, saw a change come over the child-like features; the poor lips were pale and quivering. Dulcie was murmuring of peace

and forgiveness and Heaven. He clasped her hand in his.

"Say good-by to papa," she whispered. "Poor papa!"

Once more the gray, dark-lashed eyes looked into his, with the light of the coming glory in their depths.

"You will be happy with Lilian,—don't

fret! I was glad to save you." She lifted her hand to her throat. "My locket,—don't take it off. Paul, kiss me once! Good-by!"

He stooped and laid his lips on hers; and when he lifted his head, with a strange look on his face,—white as the still quiet one,—it was all over. She was dead!

HETTY'S CAREER.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"Be sure you don't forget to dry the apples; and don't let the chimbley get a-fire; and don't let Ichabod get into the pantry window," called Mrs. Loomis, shrilly, from the folds of her green-barege veil, as the deacon cracked his whip, and old Dobbin whisked his tail, preparatory to a start.

"And, Hetty, see that 'Zekel sorts the Baldwin apples, and keeps pumpkins a-boilin' steady for the pigs; and don't rub Aunt Ruth's shoulder with kerosene instead of rheumatiz 'iniment."

That was from the deacon himself; and he emphasized it by blowing a tremendous blast within the ample folds of his red bandanna handkerchief,—that was the way in which the deacon always wound up his "few remarks" in prayer-meeting,—and then they were off.

Hetty stood in the doorway, looking after them, with a smile on her lip, but a tear in her eye,—a heightened color on her cheek as well; for there was a reproach conveyed in some of those parting admonitions which touched her to the quick. She had, on several occasions, left the pantry window open, and Ichabod, the cat, entering stealthily, had made dreadful havoc with cream and butter and custard-pie; and she had once rubbed poor Aunt Ruth's rheumatic shoulder with kerosene oil.

As for the "chimbley" getting "a-fire," that had never happened; but it was an event of which her mother had always lived in hourly expectation. She evidently believed it to be among the unalterable decrees of Providence that that "chimbley" was to "get a-fire;" and when was such a catastrophe so likely to happen as when Hetty was left mistress of all she surveyed? For Hetty was known to all Greenville as "a dreadful poor housekeeper." It was very sad and strange that "Mis' Deacon Loomis," who had borne off the palm as a notable housekeeper all her days, should have an only daughter who was little better than one of the shiftless, according to the Greenville matrons. But then what could be expected after two years of a fashionable city boarding-school, where all sorts of friv-

olity and nonsense were taught? "Mis' Loomis and the deacon were only reaping what they'd sown. As if Greenville Academy was n't good enough for any girl!"

The Greenville style of living was very primitive. For each matron to "do her own work" was the prevailing fashion. There was but one "hired girl" in town; and "Mis' Squire Lawton," who indulged in the luxury, was a never-failing theme of gossip on that account. She was in perfect health, and had a very small family; and whether she kept a girl because she was "lazy," or "stuck up," was an unsolvable problem. She was foremost in church and charitable matters, she cut and made all her own and her child's clothing, she had a garden which was the pride of Greenville, and except for this unpardonable sin of "keeping a hired girl" would have been accounted a "very likely woman;" but not the lustre of all her virtues could hide the blackness of that one spot on her fame in the eyes of Greenville housekeepers.

So when Hetty Loomis, just returned from the fashionable boarding-school whither her father's fond pride and ambition had sent her, to "go a leetle ahead of all the other girls," modestly inquired "why they could n't keep a servant," her mother held up her hands in holy horror.

"Land of mercy! When I get so lazy or so shiftless that I can't do my own work, I'll give up! A pretty talk 't would make for me to have a hired girl, just now, when you've come home to help do the work. It's high time you learned to work, against the time you have a house of your own. A hired girl, indeed! What should I do with her? Just set her down in the parlor to be waited upon; for as for having her round in my kitchen, meddling with my things, I would n't!"

Poor Hetty sighed. Life seemed to open before her an endless vista of scrubbing and scouring and baking and brewing; and she made one more effort.

"It seems a pity to live so when father has so much money. If we had to, I would n't say a word. I would try to do the best

I could,—though I do hate such an endless round of drudgery; but when we might!”—

“Sakes alive! what is the child talking about?” cried her mother. “‘Live so,’ indeed! I should like to know where you’ll find such a house as this, with carpets on every floor,—to say nothing of the Brussels in the parlor,—a chancy closet full to the brim, and such a lot of feather-beds as would do your eyes good to see! And you with a new piano that cost five hundred dollars!”

“But what is the use of having it if I never have time to play on it?” said Hetty.

“Time? You talk as if I’d lost my faculties! I’a’n’t give up work yet.”

“No; but you are getting bent and worn, mother. You ought to have a rest.”

“Supposin’ I am bent over a little? It was good, honest labor that done it; and what was folks made for but to work? Oh, to think that you should get such discontented, foolish notions into your head, Hetty,—comin’ home to be a thorn in my side, instead of the good, smart girl that I expected to be so proud of! It’s all that good-for-nothing school; and if I’d only set my foot down about that, as I felt that I’d ought to”—

“You don’t understand, mother,” said poor Hetty wearily.

“Understand! I understand that my daughter is a fool, and would like to be Queen Victory, and set on a throne, with a crown on her head!”

Hetty saw that talking would avail nothing, and from that time the subject was never renewed. She had been at home from school for two years now, and had tried conscientiously to do her best to lift burdens from her mother, which, though she would not allow it, were too much for her failing strength; but she had “no faculty for house-work,” the neighbors said. According to her mother, the trouble was that her “wits were always wool-gathering. It was as much as ever that you could trust her to skim a pan of milk.” Truth to say, Hetty’s heart was not in her work, and her thoughts would wander.

Hetty was not indolent, by any means, though she was accounted so. For music she had a passion and unusual talent; and she would have practiced upon her piano from morning until night, regardless of fatigue. She had a wonderful “knack,” too, in the making and trimming of dresses, and

she would have liked to fill the house with tasteful little ornaments of her own making; but all that, according to Mrs. Loomis’s creed, was “fol-de-rol,” and not work. It was right and proper, of course, that a girl make her own gowns; but trimming them was a sheer waste of time.

Hetty had a clear, bird-like voice, which made strangers turn and stare when they heard it in the church choir on Sundays. To have her voice cultivated was her great desire; but had she not had a quarter’s instruction at school,—to say nothing of singing-schools for half a dozen winters,—and could she not sing well enough to sing in the church choir? What more could any well-conducted young woman desire? Mrs. Loomis would like to know.

That worthy woman’s mind dwelt on her grievances as she and the deacon jogged along toward Plainville, bound on their annual visit to the deacon’s sister.

“If Hetty was only like the Perkins girls, now! Why, Mis’ Perkins would laugh at the idea of feelin’ any anxiety about leavin’ Seliny or Semanthy to keep house. They are just as smart and capable as their mother; more so,—for Sarah Rogers was called a lazy girl. And one of them Perkins girls will get the new minister, jest as sure as preachin’!”

“There a’n’t a man ’t would look at ’em when our Hetty was around,” said the deacon, with unwonted decision.

“Favor is deceitful, and beauty vain; and ministers thinks as much of their victuals, and things comfortable, as other folks. And Semanthy Perkins is called handsome, besides takin’ the prize for pickles at the fair; and nobody in town can make such cake as Seliny Perkins; and she’ll do her best for the house-warmin’,—and Mis’ Perkins will take care that the minister knows who made it.”

“Well, I don’t know as I’m in any hurry to get rid of Hetty,” said the deacon.

Hetty was the apple of her father’s eye; and if he had been master of the house,—which, alas! he was far from being,—her life would have been a much happier one.

This speech drew down his wife’s wrath upon the deacon’s head. She supposed he wanted Hetty to be an old maid, or married to some worthless city scamp, who drank and gambled. Was it every day that a smart young minister came around, evidently on the lookout for a wife?

The good deacon subsided, as he always did when his better half had the floor, and she continued her gloomy prophecies that "one of them Perkins girls would get the new minister."

In the mean time, Hetty, after telling over her duties on her fingers,—after the manner of a small boy sent to the store for various articles which he is afraid he will forget,—*"Dry apples, tell 'Zekel to sort apples and boil pigs—no, boil pumpkins, and feed pigs, and rub Aunt Ruth's shoulder with kerosene—no, don't rub Aunt Ruth's shoulder with kerosene,"* flew off to her beloved piano, to forget for a few moments all her woes.

The week's ironing was to be done; dinner must be prepared for 'Zekel, the hired man, and a man who was chopping wood, as well as for Aunt Ruth and herself; there were bread and gingerbread to be baked; there were apples innumerable to peel and slice and string to dry; there was a rent in the sitting-room carpet to be darned; the chamber-work was not yet done; and there sat Hetty solacing her soul with Chopin's waltzes and *"The Sands o' Dee"*! In the midst of it she was startled by a knock at the front door.

In Greenville it was not fashionable to knock at the front door. Unless some high dignitary, like the minister or schoolmaster, called, the old-fashioned knocker that graced the front door remained undisturbed from one year's end to another.

Before Hetty could reach the front door, it was flung open, and Deacon Perkins's rotund figure, and little, gray-fringed, squirrel-like face, presented themselves. He stood aside, with a very consequential air, to allow a young gentleman, a lady, and a little girl, to enter.

"This is Mr. Deering, the new minister, and his sister, and her little girl," announced the deacon; "and—and they've come to stop. You see, there's a kind of a mistake. I expect your father did n't write very plain; and they did n't know that the parsonage was n't ready for them. I should have taken them to my house, and been proud of the honor; but Semantha, she's down with the measles,—and pretty sick, too. Mis' Perkins—she's dretful put out about it; but Semantha—she a'n't one to take sick in the nick of time, usually,—so we can't blame her. I expect you'll think it's real lucky for you, Herriet; and you

must take care not to let the minister starve. Mis' Perkins—she'll come over and see how you are getting along."

And, after a formal hand-shaking with the minister, and an invitation to him to come over to his house to dinner when he got very hungry, Deacon Perkins took his departure.

This aroused Hetty's anger, and enabled her to conceal her dismay better than anything else could have done. Her courage "mounted equal to the occasion;" and she resolved that at least her guests should not go hungry.

The minister expressed his regret at his mistake, and hoped that she would not allow them to make any more trouble than was necessary.

It was evident, thought Hetty, that Deacon Perkins had told him what a very poor housekeeper she was; and that thought made her resolve more firmly than ever to do her very best.

She wheeled Aunt Ruth into the parlor in her invalid-chair,—she knew her mother would never forgive her if she asked the minister to sit anywhere but in the parlor,—and, leaving her to entertain the guests, set about her preparations for dinner at once.

Aunt Ruth could be very agreeable when she pleased, and, like most country-bred old ladies, had a great fondness for ministers; so Ruth devoted herself, body and soul, to her preparations for dinner, undisturbed by any feeling that her guests were being neglected. To be sure, when the fancy seized her, Aunt Ruth would ask questions concerning the most personal and delicate matters; as, for instance, when she remarked to old Mr. Peaslee that she should like to know if it was true that one of his relatives had been so unfortunate as to be hung; and asked Mr. Dennison, the schoolmaster,—the most reserved and dignified of men,—if his mother had been divorced from three husbands! Hetty could only trust that a kind Providence would restrain her from indulging in any of these little pleasantries on this occasion.

Happily for Hetty's peace of mind, the dinner was a success. The chicken was done to a turn, and kind-hearted old Miss Peaslee sent in a plum-pudding, just from the oven, with wine-sauce. Only one mishap occurred. As Hetty was seasoning the squash, the cover came off the pepper-box,

and its whole contents went into the squash; and Mrs. Perkins dropped in while they were at dinner, and discovered it on the kitchen-table! Aunt Ruth did make one of her unhappy remarks also. As he entered the dining-room, she suddenly discovered that the young minister was slightly lame. She adjusted her glasses, and surveyed his feet critically.

"Why, you 're pumblie-footed, a'n't you? But don't you mind! Talleyrand was pumblie-footed," she exclaimed.

The minister colored painfully, with that sensitiveness to a physical defect which is universal. Hetty felt a strong desire to sink through the floor, but preserved sufficient self-possession to turn the conversation into another channel,—in which effort she was seconded by the minister's sister, Mrs. Delano.

At dinner, Hetty discovered that the minister was not a young man,—that is, judged from the standpoint of nineteen years. His dark hair was faintly tinged with gray, and he looked fully thirty years old. He seemed to Hetty quite patriarchal, and she grew perfectly at her ease with him. He was homely too, she decided, with a big, Roman nose, and gray eyes. There was nothing she detested like a man with a big, Roman nose, Hetty reflected. The sister was pretty and pale and sad-looking, in her widow's weeds, and Hetty felt drawn toward her at once. The child was a frisky little elf, who required a large share of her uncle's as well as her mother's attention to keep her in order.

"You 'll send for your mother to come home, Hetty, I suppose," said Mrs. Deacon Perkins interrogatively.

Hetty decidedly supposed that she should n't: she was fired with sudden zeal to show herself a notable housekeeper. She counted the list of her duties on her fingers, after she went to bed at night, to be sure that she should forget none. After a few days, now that her heart was in her work, she found it easy to keep her mind on it, and even found leisure to play and sing for the entertainment of her guests. Mr. Deering had a considerable amount of musical knowledge, and a very fine bass voice. They sang duets together, and he praised her voice with an enthusiasm which had evidently nothing of flattery in it.

Mrs. Delano, the minister's sister, was a gentle nonentity, whose feeble health coun-

denned her to almost perpetual lying on the sofa. She and Aunt Ruth found each other congenial spirits, and the same thing seemed gradually to come to pass between Hetty and Mr. Deering. It transpired that there was a similarity about their tastes for books, as well as music, and the minister lightened many of Hetty's household tasks by reading aloud to her while she worked. They took long walks together through the autumn fields and woods, and the Greenville gossips began to shake their heads, and say that the minister was being "taken in by Hetty Loomis's pretty face;" and Mrs. Perkins, in great alarm, took occasion to tell him, several times, that he "needed a good, smart wife, considering his sister was such an invalid."

A fortnight had passed, and the parsonage was not yet ready for its occupants,—though the deacon superintended the work, and hurried the workmen to the verge of insanity; and Semanthy Perkins had not yet begun to recover from the measles.

Deacon Loomis and his wife would not come home for another fortnight; for the deacon's sister was very ill with typhoid fever, and her husband had been thrown from a wagon, and fractured his ankle. Hetty had taken the greatest pains to prevent her mother from knowing that the minister and his sister were domiciled there, and dependent for their daily bread upon the results of her baking, for she knew that her mother would hurry home at once (as if she were a baby!); and fortune so favored her that Mrs. Loomis did not discover it until her sister-in-law was so ill that she could not possibly leave her to return home. Then Mrs. Perkins was so kind as to write her, hinting that the minister had been reduced in those two weeks to the thinness of a scarecrow, and they were grievously afraid that they should lose him altogether; moreover, "people were beginning to talk."

Poor Mrs. Loomis! her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night, were of the minister devouring sour bread and underdone meat, doughnuts without sweetening and pie-crust like lead, and everything—including Hetty's prospect of being a minister's wife—going to wreck and ruin. About people's talking, Mrs. Loomis did not trouble herself so much; for she knew Sarah Perkins, and felt sure that envy and jealousy were at the bottom of that.

If she could only have known how well

Hetty could do when her heart was in it, she would have been much more tranquil. To be sure she made some of her old mistakes, now and then; but her cooking gave nobody the dyspepsia, and in the privacy of her own home Mrs. Perkins declared that "Hetty Loomis never could keep house so well if she was n't determined to get the minister!"

The truth was that Hetty had to keep her mind fixed so resolutely on her housework that she thought very little about the minister. She enjoyed their walking and talking and singing together, and did not long so intensely for the completion of the parsonage repairs as she had when her guests first came.

Hetty was shy and reserved naturally, but one day the minister drew her on to reveal all her musical aspirations to him. They were sitting in the little grove, back of the house, on a balmy Indian-summer afternoon, with golden leaves drifting about them, and ripe chestnuts falling through the stillness. It was the last day of the minister's stay. The parsonage was ready, and the next day would see him installed there.

They had been talking about music, and the great and noble career that was possible to genius of that kind, and all Hetty's longings burst forth. She told him of her mother's obstinate determination that she should stay at home and do housework, of the utter hopelessness of her longing for musical culture, and to do something that was better worth the while than washing dishes and scrubbing floors.

"There are plenty of women who are content with it, and ask nothing different. Why should I do it when I hate it?" demanded Hetty vehemently.

"You should n't! it is absurd!" said the minister. "Hetty, I did n't mean to say this to you, — at least not yet. I am older, graver, altogether different from you; but I love you, Hetty, and I am not a poor man. As my wife, you should have the opportunities you covet. Will you come to me?"

"No, indeed! Why, I don't love you, do I?" said Hetty, looking at him with wide-open, startled eyes.

The young man's face looked suddenly old and worn.

"No; of course not, child. I was a fool to think it could be so. And I ought to have told you that for years — even when I

came here — I have thought I loved another, or at least the memory of another. She deserted me, and married my classmate and friend, six years ago. I loved her so well that I did not think it possible that I could ever forget her. I think there is a witchery about you. I feel now as if the other had been only a fancy. But I ought not to have spoken. Let me be your friend, child, and do all I can to influence your father to let you go away and study, as you wish. To New York first, is it? and then — who knows? — Italy!"

And the minister smiled as brightly as if her intended departure gave him as much pleasure as her.

Hetty walked homeward by his side silent and bewildered. Still she could not be sad with a hope of going away to study music gilding all the future.

"Not father, Mr. Deering, please. I mean don't speak to him about my going away," she said eagerly, as they reached the house. "He would be willing, I know; but, you see, mother is the difficulty."

"Then I will try my powers of persuasion upon her," said Mr. Deering.

But he looked rather disappointed, as he saw how full her mind was of this idea, as if he had hoped, in spite of his acknowledgment that it was folly, that she had been thinking of something else during that silent walk.

On the day of Mrs. Loomis's return, Mr. Deering called upon her; and it was not in her heart to resist the advice and persuasions of a minister. His evident interest in Hetty delighted her, and filled her with hope for the future.

"I suppose she'll have to go to New York, and take lessons, since the minister is so set upon it. He is so fond of music himself that I suppose he wants a musical wife. Lucky he did n't happen to be the kind of a man that is on the lookout for a good housekeeper! Hetty 'a'n't spoiled her chances, it's plain to see."

And, in her delight, Mrs. Loomis gave a willing consent to Hetty's cherished plans. What she would say if she knew that she had refused to marry the minister, Hetty dared not think.

The teacher to whom she went, acting upon Mr. Deering's advice, was one of the most famous and expensive in New York; and yet Mrs. Loomis said not a word about "throwing money away." The teacher

was quite impressed by her voice, and gave her great encouragement. Her cherished hopes were realized; and yet, for some reason, she was neither as happy nor as enthusiastic as she had expected. Her zeal was fitful and flagging; dreams of the minister, and that last walk she had taken with him, came between her and work. She remembered every word he had ever said to her, each different expression of his face. Was she indolent and dreamy, as her mother had often said? Was she "good for nothing"? or was she in love? That last idea she scouted indignantly, whenever it occurred to her, and tried her best to put her whole heart into her work.

She formed one friendship, in the course of the winter, with a young widow who boarded in the same house. She had been an invalid for years, and seemed almost entirely friendless and alone. All her property was involved in a lawsuit, which had been dragging its slow length along for more than two years, and she was almost penniless. She had evidently been a beauty once, and was still handsome. She had a great deal of vanity, and was never so happy as when relating to Hetty her old society triumphs. It was only occasionally that she seemed to realize her sore strait, and then she would weep, and bewail the unkindness of fate, and the fickleness of friends, for days together.

In spite of her vanity and shallowness, Hetty felt her heart drawn toward her, and wished ardently that she were a man, that she might help her about the lawsuit.

One day, in a gay mood, Mrs. Leighton proposed to show Hetty a collection of pictures of her old lovers.

"I keep them just as Indians keep scalps, you know, child," she said; "not because I have a particle of feeling for any of them. Sentiment was never much in my line, and the little I had once I have quite outgrown."

Hetty found the stories of her conquests a little tiresome sometimes, and looked the package of photographs over rather listlessly until she came to one which made her heart beat quicker. It was a much younger face than Mr. Deering's looked now, but surely there was no mistake!

"He is dreadfully homely, is n't he?" chattered Mrs. Leighton. "But he was just as good as gold. If he knew what a forlorn situation I am in now, he would

come to my aid, I know,—I don't know whether I can say as much for any of the others,—and I treated him the worst of the whole, too, for I promised solemnly to marry him; but how he could have been such a goose as to think I really meant it, I don't know. The idea of my marrying a poor minister!—though he did have quite a fortune left him six months after I married Charlie Leighton. But he was preaching in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, when I heard of him last, with a kind of Quixotic notion of doing good, I suppose,—he was always that sort of a fellow,—and I never could have endured that. I wonder where he is now? and whether he is married? I have no doubt I could twist him around my little finger, even such a wreck as I am now, he loved me so, poor fellow! See where I wrote on the photograph 'Philip, my king,'—his name was Philip Deering,—but that was only for his eyes. I was a horrid little flirt! I never cared a particle for him, and I did like Charlie Leighton,—besides his having money. But poor Charlie is gone,"—wiping away an imaginary tear,— "and I do wish I knew where Philip Deering is!"

Hetty rose and left the room, murmuring a hurried excuse.

She felt disturbed, unhappy, angry, to a degree which she could not understand. Why should the fact that this was Philip Deering's old sweetheart, and that she "knew she could twist him around her little finger again," disturb her, since she did not love him? Was it not her duty to tell her where he was, since she was so forlorn and friendless? Yet the thought of a meeting between those two was unendurable to her. She struggled with herself for weeks, growing pale and thin, and neglecting her music, until at last her teacher exclaimed, in despair,—

"Mees, no person should aspire to be an artist whose mind is not there; who is pre-occupied; that is, you understand, whose heart is given away otherwheres!"

Poor Hetty! she had begun to understand that her heart was indeed "given away otherwheres"!

At length there came a day when Mrs. Leighton's disease assumed an acute form, and the doctors declared her life in danger. She wept piteously at the thought of dying so friendless and alone, and Hetty could hesitate no longer. She wrote a note to Mr. Deering,—the first that had ever pass-

ed between them, — telling him simply that his old love was there, friendless and penniless, and very ill.

He came at once. What passed between them, Hetty did not know; but Mrs. Leighton's health and spirits seemed suddenly to revive. *He staid in the city a week, and before the end of that time she was pronounced out of danger.*

"It arouses my hope and courage to find that I still have a friend in the world. I have a presentiment that I shall get well," she said.

And get well she did.

In the course of a month, Mr. Deering came again to see her. His manner toward Hetty was cold and constrained. He told her the news from home, and inquired about her music, but seemed anxious to get away from her as soon as possible. Mrs. Leighton was in great spirits, because he had been attending to her lawsuit, and had discovered *that she was almost certain to win.*

"I can't bear to marry a minister, but I don't feel that I can refuse poor Philip anything," she said to Hetty.

In a few weeks more, when the case was about to be decided, he came again. He came into the parlor where Hetty sat alone. She had not expected him, and a scarlet flush rose to her brow.

"I am glad to see that color again," he said abruptly. *"You did n't look like yourself the last time I saw you. I am afraid the city air and hard work is n't good for a little country girl."*

"I have n't been working hard," Hetty felt compelled by honesty to say. *"I am*

afraid I am wasting my time. I think perhaps I had better go home."

"Go home! Is it possible that you are tired of it already? What would Professor — say?"

"He says that I don't do well because my heart is 'otherwheres,'" said Hetty.

She could have bitten her tongue out the next moment for making such a very suggestive speech.

"Hetty, where is your heart?"

For answer, Hetty — poor Hetty! she was not the least bit strong-minded — hid her face in her hands, and sobbed.

She did not see the great light that illumined his face; but he took her comfortably into his arms, and kissed the hands that covered her eyes.

"Hetty, is it possible? Is it true that you love me?"

"I — I did n't say so," stammered Hetty. *"I don't know what right you have to think so, when you love and are going to marry Mrs. Leighton."*

"But if I love no one but you, and had not the slightest thought of marrying any one but you, would it be true?"

"I — I suppose so, — yes," said Hetty.

"If being my wife meant house-work, and no more music, would you marry me?"

"Yes," said Hetty unhesitatingly, though a faint little sigh did follow the *"yes."*

Mrs. Deering keeps *"a girl."* She is not a household drudge, but the many cares of a minister's wife have put an end to all prospect of a musical career. Whether she ever regrets it, ever wishes that her heart had not been *"otherwheres,"* I cannot tell.

HETTY'S EXPERIENCE.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"Good-by, Hetty! Be sure and eat your meals as reg'lar as you can, and give my love to Sarah Ann, and I'm afraid you'll be sorry you didn't let me put in another apple-turnover, and be sure to write the minute you get to New York."

That was Aunt Maria's farewell, and as it was uttered in a very loud tone, with that indifference to the opinions of mankind which characterized Maria, it caused a smile to appear on almost every face in the car which Hetty was entering.

"Don't enter into conversation with no strange men on the cars, Hetty, and don't be kerried away by the follies of the world when you git there," said good old Deacon Eastman, with a shake of the hand that made her arm ache.

Elkanah Eastman followed Hetty into the car. Elkanah, tall, angular, raw-boned, red-haired; dressed in his Sunday clothes, which hung upon him much in the same manner that clothes are hung upon a bean-pole to scare away the crows, — at least that is what Hetty thought.

He held Hetty's little, soft, brown hand in his hard, bony one, a moment longer than was necessary.

"You won't forget us, quite, will you, Hetty? You know this parting means a great deal to me." And the great big fellow's voice actually trembled. It was too ridiculous! thought Hetty.

"Oh, no! I won't forget Derby, nor any of you, — I am not at all likely to," said Hetty carelessly.

But her face did flush a little, under Elkanah's earnest eyes.

Elkanah sighed, and dropped her hand.

Aunt Maria's voice rang out again.

"I wish I'd het a brick for your feet; and don't get took in by no prize packages; and for mercy's sake look out for your trunk, for they'll get it away from you if they can."

And then Hetty was whisked away out into the great world, which looked a very snowy one, just now, and overhung by a dreary, gray, December sky.

Hetty looked back after they had left the

station behind, and there was Elkanah, still standing on the platform, looking after the train, a very forlorn figure, with his coat-tails and his big blue muffler blowing in the wind, and his red hair lighting up the whole landscape. It *would* be a good thing to stand him up on a rocky coast, for a light-house, as Belle Benton, a young lady who had come home from boarding-school with her, had suggested, thought Hetty: his hair would serve instead of a light.

But it was a little too bad to make fun of Elkanah, she reflected, the next moment, for he was so good, and so devoted to her, and had waited upon her like a bond slave ever since she was a baby, while she had teased and snubbed him incessantly. She had never even thought that it was too bad to make fun of him before, but her heart was a little softened today by the thought that she was leaving home, perhaps never to return.

Before many miles were passed over, the thought of Elkanah, and even of all her friends and her home, was banished by visions of the gay delights to which she was going.

Derby was a country town, slow-going and old-fashioned; and, except to a boarding-school in another town of the very same pattern, Hetty had never been away from it in her life. But in the boarding-school were a great many city young ladies, and Hetty had picked up ideas of living that made Derby very distasteful to her. For five years she had been an orphan, without brothers or sisters, and had lived with Aunt Maria, an "antiquated maid," whose eccentricity was only equaled by her kindness of heart. Aunt Vandervere — otherwise Sarah Ann — had written, asking her to spend the winter with her in New York, and to live with her altogether if they "suited each other." Aunt Vandervere was Aunt Maria's half sister, but they were "no more alike than black was like white," according to Aunt Maria. "Sarah Ann" was a worldly and ambitious young woman, who had married a man old enough to be her grandfather for the sake of his money and position, and

had become a leader in New-York society. She was a widow, now, and "lonely," and wished her niece to live with her. Aunt Maria sniffed contemptuously at the idea of Sarah Ann's "loneliness," and declared openly that she wanted Hetty only because she had heard that she was a beauty and an heiress.

But Hetty insisted upon going. Did Aunt Maria think she was going to be contented to settle down there among the Vermont hills? — why, it was n't living at all! And when Aunt Maria declared that she was "just like her Aunt Sarah Ann," and would "come to nothing better," Hetty perversely insisted that was "just what she would like to come to;" she could not imagine any happier lot than to be "a frivolous worldling," as Aunt Maria called it, and live in a whirl of gayety. Aunt Maria got the minister and Deacon Lombard to pray that she might be "brought to a better mind," and then when Hetty still persisted in having the same mind she sent to Montpelier for a stylish dressmaker, and fitted Hetty out with all the finery that could be gathered from far and near, that Sarah Ann might not think they knew nothing about the fashions!

And so Hetty went on her way rejoicing, almost utterly heedless of all the ties she was breaking, and Maria went to her desolate home, wiping an unaccustomed tear from her eyes, and worrying about the many ravening wolves in sheep's clothing that might pick Hetty's bones before she reached New York; and Elkanah Eastman went back to his law studies in Squire Tolman's office, feeling that life was a dreary blank, and it mattered very little what became of him.

Hetty had a whole seat in the car to herself, and made herself very comfortable, with all the bags and shawls and bundles which Aunt Maria had forced upon her carefully disposed around her, and a new magazine open in her hand; and, thus equipped, she occupied herself, not with reading, but with gay visions of the future before her.

The train gradually filled up, as it stopped at the various stations, and presently a gentleman presented himself beside Hetty's seat, with an elaborate bow, and an air of great deference.

"I am very sorry to disturb you, but there is not another unoccupied seat on the

train," he said. "If you will allow me to occupy this seat beside you" —

Hetty gave a little nod of assent; the more graciously that she had stolen a glance at him, and discovered him to be a very elegant young man. Not handsome exactly; his Roman nose was too *prononce*, and his chin too sharp for that: but his dark, expressive eyes, and his aristocratic air, made him very interesting to Hetty. However, she remembered the warnings she had received with regard to making acquaintances on the cars, and looked demurely on her magazine, or meditatively out of the window, while the young man buried himself in a newspaper, with apparent unconsciousness of her existence.

Early in the afternoon they stopped at a station where they were allowed "ten minutes for refreshments." The interesting young man who shared Hetty's seat sprang to his feet with the "do or die" expression common to the masculine traveler under such circumstances, and rushed for the door; then turned suddenly, and looked at Hetty.

"Will you allow me to bring you something?" he said, with another of those deferential bows which Hetty thought almost irresistible.

Deacon Eastman's warning flashed across her mind, just in time. She would have liked to accept graciously that polite offer, but, instead, she replied with a dignity and primness that would have rejoiced Aunt Maria's heart, —

"No, thank you. I have a lunch with me."

And the young man bowed again, and departed.

"Now he won't speak to me again; or if he does it will be very presuming, and I won't have anything to say to him!" thought Hetty. But Fate, sitting in the shadow, wove her net, regardless of Hetty's resolution.

Before the ten minutes' grace was over, our Hetty's *compagnon du voyage* made his appearance in the car, bearing aloft a cup of coffee, with an air which elevated the somewhat menial service to an act of princely condescension.

"I took the liberty of getting this for you because I was sure you needed it," he said, and Hetty had not the heart to refuse.

"You have only to throw the cup and saucer out of the window when you have

finished," he said; and then he absorbed himself again in his newspaper.

Hetty began to wonder what he could find in that one newspaper to occupy him so long. He seemed so utterly oblivious of everything about him that she felt a mischievous desire to fire off a torpedo, or stick a pin into him. But while she was revivifying these amiable desires in her mind, there came a crash that seemed to her like the crack of doom; after the crack came a strain, and quivering, as if all the timbers of the cars were going to pieces.

Hetty wondered whether it was the end of the world, or an earthquake, or a collision, tried to say her prayers, grew dizzy and faint, and only recovered her consciousness to find that she was alive and safe, and clinging tightly to the dignified young man's arm, and that all the other occupants of the car were in their places, though looking a good deal shaken up and scared. She withdrew her arm from the interesting young man's with great celerity, blushing furiously.

"It was very natural that you should be frightened," he said soothingly. "I thought, myself, that something very serious had happened."

Every other man in the car rushed out to see what was the matter, but Hetty's companion did not stir. He seemed to feel that she needed a protector, and kept casting anxious glances at her, to see if she had fully recovered.

Hetty's heart began to warm toward him; his kindness was so delicate and unobtrusive.

It was soon reported that an obstruction on the track had caused the shock, and disabled the engine. The train would be delayed until another engine could reach them from a town forty miles distant.

During the long and tedious waiting that ensued, the ice of reserve melted very rapidly between Hetty and the interesting young gentleman. Surely, even Aunt Maria could not expect her to repel his advances any longer, thought Hetty. And he was so dignified, so thoroughly a gentleman! there could be no harm in having a little pleasant conversation with him.

They became astonishingly good friends, for so short a time, as people always do under such circumstances, where conventional restraints are removed, and yet her companion was very reticent on some points.

He did not reveal his name, or position in life, his starting point or his destination. He might be the Khan of Tartary, for all that she knew, Hetty reflected, with a slight feeling of pique. Neither did he betray the slightest curiosity with regard to her, and pride checked Hetty's natural, school-girl abandon, and made her as reticent as he was. If he had no further interest in her than as a pleasant companion for a few hours, neither had she in him! And yet she did wonder if that would be the last they should ever see of each other!

The train had been due in New York at midnight, but, owing to the accident that had befallen the engine, it did not reach there till nearly morning. Her agreeable companion had beguiled the way very much to Hetty, but she was very glad when the rain rumbled into the depot, and the dejected and weary-eyed passengers began to alight.

Though the train had been so long delayed, she found a carriage waiting for her. Her traveling companion recognized the coachman, with apparently very great surprise.

"Is it possible that you are going to Mrs. Vandervere's?" he exclaimed, as he assisted her and her bundles into the carriage. "Then I shall certainly have the very great pleasure of meeting you again. The Fates have certainly favored me!" And with a gay "good-morning," he was gone.

And Hetty felt much less lonely and forlorn for that assurance that she should see him again.

In the gray dawn she found herself tripping up the steps of an elegant mansion, in an aristocratic street. The housekeeper, in rustling black silk, and looking very much like a fine lady, to Hetty's country-bred eyes, was waiting to receive her.

Mrs. Vandervere had been sitting up all night, in great anxiety about her, and had been overcome by fatigue, and retired only an hour ago; as she was sleeping now, the housekeeper thought she had better not be disturbed. So Hetty was shown directly to her room, and in a very few minutes had forgotten all the "chances and changes of this mortal life" in a dreamless sleep.

She awoke to find sunshine flooding the room, and a strange face bending over her. It seemed to her so youthful a face at the first glance, that she thought it could not be her aunt; but a moment's scrutiny

showed her that its bloom was not the bloom of youth, and that "Nature's sweet and cunning hand" had been supplanted by Art's. Even the smile that wreathed the lips looked as if it had been made to order, thought Hetty.

"My dearest child!" said her aunt, in carefully modulated tones of well-bred delight. "I was so anxious about you! and it is such a pleasure to see you, my only sister's only child!"

Hetty returned her aunt's caress, but not with great fervor; she could not forget that her aunt had never remembered her "only sister"'s existence after her marriage with the rich Mr. Vandervere, and she was shrewd enough to understand, without Aunt Maria's suggestion, that if her father had not made that lucky land speculation, a few years before his death, which made her a great heiress, even as Mrs. Vandervere reckoned money, she might have been still oblivious of the existence of her "only sister's only child."

"Get up, and come to the light, child, where I can see your face! I have heard that you were a beauty, but I am not so sure of it,—you are such a little brown thing! But your eyes are magnificent! so large and dark, and what a flash there is in them! why, child, it reminds me of—what is that thing they used to cut peoples' heads off with? The guillotine! That's it,—so keen and sharp. I'm not sure that it is perfectly well-bred to have such eyes! But they'll be sure to be taking! You'll have all the eligible young men at your feet. Why, I should n't wonder if even Richard should fall in love with you!"

"Who is Richard?" asked Hetty.

"Richard Vandervere,—my husband's nephew. He is a great catch, and knows he can have his choice among the most charming girls in society, but the dear fellow is so fastidious, I doubt sometimes whether he will ever marry."

Hetty brightened up. She was a born flirt, and she thought it would be great fun to try her powers on a "fastidious" young man.

"You are not a bit countryfied, my dear; you can easily acquire style; and you have originality, which is a great blessing" Mrs. Vandervere went on, "and I'm sure you'll be a great success."

"I consider myself a success now, aunt, and I'm not sure that I want to acquire

anything!" said Hetty, who did not quite enjoy being criticized, as if she were a doll or a picture.

Mrs. Vandervere called her a little piece of vanity, and summoned her maid to assist her in dressing, herself assisting at the toilet, and giving directions, and declaring that her clothes, in which Aunt Maria had taken so much pride, were "dreadfully dowdy," and not at all suited to her style, and that an entire wardrobe must be purchased for her, before she could be presentable.

As Hetty followed her aunt into the breakfast-room a gentleman who was lounging in an arm-chair in the bay-window rose to meet them.

"Why, Richard, you so early? And I did not even know that you had returned!" said Mrs. Vandemere.

And Hetty found herself shaking hands with her traveling companion! Mrs. Vandervere's face wore an expression of intense surprise.

"You don't mean to say that you two are acquainted with each other? Where in the world did you meet?"

Mr. Richard Vandemere recounted their adventures of the day before, and Hetty's aunt called her an "impudent little puss" to make the acquaintance of a strange gentleman in the cars; but then she "supposed Richard was irresistible; all the young ladies thought so."

It seemed that "Richard" had been to Canada, on business, and was returning when chance threw him in Hetty's way.

Hetty, as she ate her breakfast demurely, saying very little, was thinking that it was a fortunate chance. She felt very well contented with her lot. She had left Derby and Elkanah Eastman very far behind in her thoughts.

The days that followed were very pleasant ones. Constant visits to dressmakers and milliners alone detracted from Hetty's enjoyment; and there was "a joy in the heart of that pain," certainly, for she discovered that her beauty was being "made the most of," to use Mrs. Vandervere's expression, as it never had been before.

Mrs. Vandervere did not seem to be in any haste to introduce her into society, though she trusted her to plenty of opera and theatre going and sight-seeing. Everywhere Mr. Richard Vandemere was their devoted cavalier. It became evident, very

soon, that, fastidious as he was, Hetty had made a *decided impression upon him*.

"My dear child, I think that Richard is really learning to love you," said Mrs. Vandervere, one day a fortnight after Hetty's arrival. "And you ought to be the proudest and happiest girl in the world. Why, a princess might be proud to have him for a husband!"

"I don't know that I think he is anything so wonderful!" said Hetty perversely; but her cheek flushed brightly, as it had a habit of doing at the mention of his name.

"You don't mean to say, Hetty, that you don't love him?" said Mrs. Vandervere, with reproach and anxiety both in her eyes.

"Love him, aunt! How could I love him in this little bit of a while? and when I have no reason at all to think that he cares for me!"

"Oh, that's all!" said her aunt, with a sigh of relief. "Well, I think you will very soon find out that he does care for you."

"And then I have n't seen anybody else. How could I tell whether I liked him better than anybody else when I had never seen anybody else?" persisted Hetty.

"You shall see others. We are going to Mrs. Clymer's Wednesday night, and you will see then how like a god Richard looks among the common herd, and how he is flattered and sought after!"

"I never could endure a ladies' man!" said Hetty, who enjoyed teasing her aunt.

"Hetty, you had no lover in Derby, had you?" inquired Mrs. Vandervere anxiously.

"Lover? no, indeed! What an absurd ideal!" laughed Hetty.

But she did think of Elkanah Eastman, and wondered what Aunt Vandervere would think of him for a lover. He had written to her since she had been in New York,—a sensible, friendly letter, with only a little touch of sentiment at the end,—and she had carelessly glanced it over, and thought it was hardly worth the while to answer it, now that she and Elkanah had no interests in common.

On the night of Mrs. Clymer's party Hetty ran down to the drawing-room, as soon as she was dressed, to await her aunt's coming. She was as delighted as a child with her first party dress, and sailed up and down the long rooms like a peacock, glancing over her shoulder continually at her own dazzling reflection in the mirror.

Suddenly, from the shelter of a curtain, Richard Vandervere appeared, laughing.

"All 'fit for the fight'? Armed to the teeth, and ready for conquest! Who would believe there could be so much vanity in such a fresh little daisy as you? But there must be no flirting, remember!"

"Must?" Hetty looked up with a little of that "guillotine flash" in her eyes.

"Because you belong to me! Don't you?"

The last two words were in a pleading, caressing tone, and Hetty's eyes and heart softened. She felt dazzled, bewildered, fascinated. She yielded to the arms that clasped her, and let her head droop upon his breast, regardless that her coiffure was a miracle of Monsieur Pennquier's art.

And yet a strange, distrustful feeling mingled with her happiness. This was not like the love of which she had so fondly dreamed.

"It is all settled, aunt," said Richard cheerily as he put them into the carriage. "We are to have a wedding before spring."

The expression of delight on Mrs. Vandervere's face surprised Hetty. In spite of all the flattery and praise she lavished upon Richard, Hetty had a fancy that her aunt had, in the bottom of her heart, no great love for him. Why she wished so much to see her his wife she could not tell.

Hetty created a sensation at Mrs. Clymer's *soiree*. She was fresh and bright, and her beauty was of an uncommon type. She was surrounded by a throng of admirers; but she thought, as she looked at them all, that her aunt was right,—no one of them could compare with Richard. She wondered, with a humility that was new to her, why he should have chosen her.

But, as they were leaving the rooms, she overheard a whispering which annoyed her a little.

"Vandervere has caught an heiress at last," one rather dissipated-looking young man was saying to another.

"It's time too," responded his companion. "It's a game he has been trying for the last ten years. And he's run through with what money his father left him. I don't suppose he's got money enough to pay for his cigars."

Money! That had never occurred to Hetty as a reason for Richard's devotion to her. She understood readily enough that it made her of value in her aunt's eyes; but surely Richard was too noble to be influ

enced by any mercenary motive. She dismissed the suspicion at once as unworthy. If he had no money, what did it matter? She had enough for both.

Richard was not a particularly ardent lover; but he was a very impatient one. He was anxious that the marriage should take place immediately, and almost grew angry when Hetty resolutely refused to consent.

She was too happy as she was, had not had enough of gayety, and was not ready to settle down into being a dignified matron, she said. The truth was, that she shrank from the marriage with a feeling of dread for which she could not account.

One day, two months after her engagement to Richard, the servant announced a visitor for her; and she went down to the drawing-room, to meet—Elkanah Eastman,—Elkanah, thinner, bonier, more Yankeeified than ever, she thought, after her first thrill of delight at meeting him had passed; for she was delighted, more so than she should have believed possible previously.

But Elkanah was gloomy and ill at ease. He evidently had something on his mind which it was not easy to utter. It came out at last.

"Hetty," he said, "I have a very thankless task to perform. I shall cause you pain, and make you hate me, and possibly do no good; but I cannot see you rushing into lifelong misery without trying to save you."

Hetty had felt an undefined presentiment of evil when he began; and, in her suspense, her heart almost ceased to beat when he paused.

"The man whom you have promised to marry is not what you think him, Hetty. He is thoroughly dissolute and unprincipled. Do not get angry till you have stopped to think. You know I can have no unworthy motive in this, Hetty. I have given up all hope of winning you myself,—I know I never had any right to hope at all,—and if he were worthy of you"—

"If you have come here only to slander my future husband," said Hetty, "the sooner you go, the pleasanter it will be for me."

And Hetty raised herself to her full height, and from her eyes flashed a glance meant to annihilate the presumptuous young man.

"Hetty, only listen to me patiently," he persisted. "I can prove to you that Richard Vandervere's life has been"—

Hetty swept out of the room, and left him alone.

In truth, poor Elkanah had not displayed much tact in the telling of his tale; and he left the house with a consciousness of this heavy upon him.

"And yet," he thought mournfully, "Hetty loves the man, and nothing would have convinced her."

As for Hetty, she was too angry to be conscious of any other feeling.

She was rushing up to her own room, when, as she passed the library-door, the sound of her own name, in a loud and an angry voice, arrested her steps.

"I tell you you must bring the little devil to terms. I have lived as long as I am going to on the miserable pittance that you dole out to me. If the marriage does not come off within a month, I'll take steps to prove the will a forgery, or at any rate to prove undue influence. I can do it easily, and you know it; for everybody knows that my uncle meant to make me his heir. When you got up this scheme to marry me to this girl, I supposed she was a simple little countryfied thing, who could be managed easily; but the moment I saw her on the cars,—where I followed your shrewd idea of scraping acquaintance with her, and getting into her good graces, before she saw anybody else,—I saw that there was a good deal of Tartar to her. If you'll make her marry me right away, I'll risk but that I can manage her; but I am not going to stand this shilly-shallying."

It was Richard Vandervere's voice; and Mrs. Vandervere was trying in vain to quiet him.

Hetty felt faint and sick. By a great effort, she summoned strength enough to creep up to her room, and lock the door behind her.

Her thoughts came rapidly. Elkanah was right. Richard Vandervere was thoroughly unprincipled, and he cared for her only for the sake of her money. And her aunt was linked with him in a plot against her. She was all alone and friendless.

At last a way of escape dawned upon her. Elkanah had told her that he was going home to Derby that night at six o'clock.

She reached the depot in time; and almost the first person she saw there was El-

kanah, — Elkanah, the picture of despair as well as awkwardness.

She slipped her hand into his.

“O Elkanah!” she said, — “forgive me, and take me home. I have found out that it is all true, — what you said; and I want to go home.”

Such a light as came into Elkanah's eyes! Hetty never forgot it.

I may as well end my story here, since Hetty's New-York experience is ended.

I will only add, that, when anybody ventures to insinuate to Mrs. Elkanah Eastman that her husband is not handsome, she always says that she “fell in love with him on account of his ugliness and awkwardness,” and that she “would n't have him a bit handsomer for the world.”

HOW LUCILLA TRIED TO OUTWIT THEM.

BY FRANCES E. WADLEIGH.

Certainly Lucilla Barrett's visit to Windsor was not an unalloyed blessing. Her aunt and hostess, Mrs. Fontaine, was scarcely willing to own it to herself; but in her heart of hearts she sincerely wished the girl had remained with her grandparents in Monroe. This was by no means her first visit: she had spent many a week with her cousins in former days, when she was a poor school-girl, and a scarcely less poor school-teacher; but it was her first appearance as an heiress.

In the early autumn, Lucilla wrote to her aunt, asking if it would be convenient for her to spend the winter with her, adding to the request, —

"As you always made me welcome in my humble days, I do not hesitate to invite myself now that I am wealthy, and can make you some return pecuniarily for your former kindnesses. True, my newly acquired fortune — grandma wrote you about it, of course — is not boundless: some people would think five thousand a year comparative poverty. But I am very well satisfied: it is better than school-teaching."

Of course Mrs. Fontaine replied by inviting her to stay with them as long as she liked; and Lucilla came in a few days, bringing a French maid and trunks innumerable. Out of the latter came handsome, acceptable gifts for her three cousins, Virgie, Ida, and Sophie Fontaine, — dresses, ornaments, and jewelry that they had often sighed for in vain: for Mrs. Fontaine's income was limited; and, owing to recent failures of some neighboring banks, they were just then unable, not only to purchase new wearing apparel, but, worse yet, to pay some outstanding debts which pressed heavily on their honest hearts.

Lucilla gracefully removed this incubus by giving her aunt a check for a generous sum.

"Only a part, dear Aunt Dora," she had generously said, "of what I really owe you for your kindnesses."

Many a pleasant addition was made to the furniture and the decorations of the house; Lucilla's carriage and horses were always

at hand for family use; Marie, her maid, was invaluable when the young ladies dressed for any of the many parties to which they were now invited; and Lucilla's ready purse enabled them to give charming lunch-parties, informal dances, and evening gatherings.

Never had the three Fontaine girls enjoyed life so much. It was only a mother's love-sharpened eyes that could discern the cloud, "like a man's hand," which was arising out of this sea of gayety and pleasure.

Virgie Fontaine had been engaged for over a year to Cyril Sherwin, an estimable young lawyer, whose only fault — for, in the eyes of half Windsor, it was a fault — was his lack of gold. He was industrious and talented; and he and Virgie were sure, that in three or four years, at the furthest, his income would warrant their marrying. The old lawyers were unanimous in declaring that he would one day be a famous man.

Ida, the second of the Fontaine girls, was not yet engaged: but Lucius Rowsell, the handsomest, most elegant, most popular young man in Franklin County, was her constant shadow; and every one, old Dr. Rowsell included, looked upon it as a settled thing that sweet, gentle Ida Fontaine would eventually preside over the stately Rowsell mansion.

Rowsell and Sherwin, having been born and brought up in the same town, were well acquainted, but were not friends. Rowsell considered Sherwin a prig and a book-worm; and Sherwin returned the compliment by esteeming the other a selfish fool.

Of course both the young men were civil to Lucilla when she first came. Gradually they became more than that, and this was what troubled Mrs. Fontaine. She was sure that her niece was desperately, deliberately flirting with her cousin's lovers.

Virgie was too sure of Cyril's love, and too confident of his honor, and Ida was too honest and unsuspicious, to see anything amiss.

The former, however, realized that she saw less and less of her *fiance* as the days rolled on, and finally, just after Christmas, intimated as much to him, saying, —

"Are you aware, dear Cyril, that for four weeks you and I have never once walked, driven, or even talked, for five minutes together, when Lucilla was not with us?"

"I know we don't have the nice chats we used to; but I guess you've rather stretched the time, have n't you? Lucilla certainly is bright and entertaining" —

"Oh! well, if you prefer to have her with us" —

"Good gracious, Virgie! how can I help her being here? I can't order her out of the parlor, can I? I never thought you'd be so jealous."

You may be sure Virgie said no more.

Lucilla, however, suspected something of this conversation; for Cyril — who, in thinking the matter over, realized that he had neglected Virgie of late — was less cordial to her for a few days afterward. She did not take offence; but one evening, when they were at a party, she said, —

"Tell me honestly, Mr. Sherwin: what have I done to offend you?"

"Offend me, Miss Lucilla! Nothing. Why do you ask?"

"You are so — so cool. It wounds me to have my friends, those whom I lo — like, slight me. I know I am not meek and amiable," and she sighed heavily, "nor am I handsome; but" —

"Nonsense, Miss Lucilla! You are depreciating yourself."

"No, I am not. I hear the truth too often from Virgie and Ida. I wish my uncle had never left me any money. When we were all poor together, the girls and Aunt Dora petted me; but now they seem so envious. They are always saying that you and other gentlemen are attentive to me solely on account of my money."

"Surely you are mistaken. You cannot believe that, at any rate."

"You, for instance, would like me as well if I had not a penny?"

"Of course I should," replied Cyril, annoyed at the turn their conversation had taken. "Have n't we always been good friends?"

"Friends? Yes; but only friends. And we can never be anything more! You are bound to Virgie," whispered Lucilla sadly, looking into Cyril's dear brown eyes as if

her very life were dependent on his next word.

Lucilla was very beautiful and very winning. The breath of the violets she wore, the mild radiance of the full moon peeping through the window where they sat, the intoxicating strains of one of Strauss's waltzes sounding from harp and violin, her low and tender tones and loving glances, might have tempted almost any man to foolish speeches; but fortunately Cyril bethought him of Virgie, and shook off the spell this lovely enchantress had almost cast over him.

Rising, he said laughingly, as if the affair were but a jest, —

"I declare, Miss Lucilla, this combined music and moonlight is making us quite sentimental. Suppose we adjourn to the supper-room, and get an ice."

Lucilla was furious. She smiled pleasantly as she, too, rose, and chatted about nothing; but she vowed vengeance in her inmost heart.

That night, as the girls were undressing after the party, Lucilla went into Sophie's room, and exclaimed, —

"O Sophie dear! I am in such trouble. You must help me. Will you not?"

"Certainly I will, dear. What is the matter?"

"Cyril Sherwin and I were sitting in the bay-window this evening; and, before we knew it, we got to talking about ourselves. O Sophie! what shall I do? I love him, — love him to distraction; and he — well, he owned in so many words that he — he *liked* me." Strong emphasis on the word "*like*" conveyed a great deal of meaning to Sophie's ears. "But he is bound to Virgie. Oh! I am so miserable."

Sighs and well-counterfeited tears made Sophie believe the tale, in spite of herself; and she answered, —

"If I were you, I would consult mamma about it."

"I'd like to; but I dare not. Will you tell her?"

Sophie did; and Mrs. Fontaine determined to probe the matter to the bottom. Lucilla signified her willingness to be confronted with Cyril (and her evident willingness dispelled the few shades of doubt lingering in her aunt's mind) when he should be charged with his inconstancy.

Cyril was astounded when Mrs. Fontaine, in the presence of Lucilla and Virgie, asked him to repeat the conversation which her

niece had quoted. Surprise, not guilt, sent the crimson blood up into his cheeks and forehead; but, as often happens, the cause of this danger signal was misunderstood, and it was counted as a witness against him.

Mrs. Fontaine and Virgie reminded him, when he confessed to having used the word "like," but insisted that he said and meant no more, that for some weeks he had been quite as attentive to Lucilla as to his betrothed; and, in spite of the latter's remonstrances, things were by no means on their former footing.

"Seems to me, Virgie," exclaimed Cyril bitterly, "that you are determined to quarrel with me, or you would believe me before you do Lucilla."

"I am determined to find out which of us two you love the best," she replied. "I have suspected that you preferred Lucilla. Even after I spoke to you about it, you would walk and talk with her rather than with me" —

"I could n't help it," interrupted Cyril hotly. "She joined me on the street, and sat beside me in the parlor."

"Oh, you men are all like your grandfather Adam," replied Lucilla. "He laid the blame on Eve. 'She tempted me.' And so it has been ever since. I made love to you, did I? I invited you to go driving, sleighing, skating, eh? I invited you to dance at all the parties; sent you books and flowers, fruit and candy?"

Cyril could not say anything. He had shown her all these attentions a little oftener than he ought, and his conscience pricked him.

Virgie took umbrage at his silence. She rose quietly, and, taking his ring from her finger, handed it to him, saying, —

"We have made a mistake. I set you free, for I cannot pretend to rival Lucilla with her beauty and her wealth."

Cyril threw the ring into the fireplace (it fell in the ashes, and Ida afterward rescued it), and, taking his hat, said to Mrs. Fontaine, —

"Before I leave you, Mrs. Fontaine, let me assure you that I never knowingly made love to your niece, and never intended to slight Virgie. Good-morning."

Lucilla, her maid, and her trunks, betook themselves the next day to a boarding-house.

Cyril Sherwin, whose heart was sore and

angry at Virgie's treatment, was at last persuaded to call on Lucilla, when she convinced him that her reputation was blasted and her happiness destroyed by his conduct toward her. She wept, and exerted all her powers of fascination. Cyril felt reckless; and, before he left her that evening, they were engaged, and the wedding-day was set for Easter-week.

Lucius Rowsell was wrathful when he heard that "that prig, Sherwin," had won Lucilla and her money.

"I had ten minds to propose to the girl myself, she is such a stunner," as he phrased it.

And this engagement only made him admire her the more. The unattainable is, to some persons, the only thing that is desirable.

If Cyril Sherwin had cared anything for his future bride, he would have been annoyed at the devotion which Lucius now displayed. Even when kind friends whispered to him that Lucius had openly boasted that he could and would carry off the prize from under his very nose, Cyril only laughed, and shrugged his shoulders. Dr. Rowsell, too, was as attentive, in a strictly paternal way, as Lucius. Their fortune was not so extensive as Windsor believed. Indeed Lucius's extravagance and his father's unlucky speculations had reduced it from hundreds of thousands to a few thousands; and, unless some such windfall as Lucilla's fifty or sixty thousand (no one knew exactly how much) came into their hands, they must soon become almost penniless.

But, in spite of this flirtation, preparations for the marriage went on. Hundreds of invitations were sent out, Mrs. Fontaine and her daughters being among the recipients.

The morning of the wedding-day dawned fair and bright. Virgie hid her head, and wept again, in spite of her assumed bravery all these dreary weeks, when the bright sun peeped in, and reminded her that his setting would shine on the grave of her happiness. Nevertheless she rose and dressed, and went down to breakfast with a forced smile lighting up her thin face.

Would it have consoled her any, I wonder, if she had known that Cyril had walked his bedroom floor all night long? More than once in his lonely walk had he exclaimed, —

"What a blockhead I have been! How can I go through tomorrow! I'd break the whole thing off this minute if I thought Virgie would ever look kindly on me again, and forgive me. But, pshaw! she don't care. If she had ever loved me, she would have given me a chance to explain."

As Virgie took her seat at the table, a note, addressed by Lucilla, was handed her. Biting her lips to keep back the tears, she opened it, and read it in silence.

"My goodness, Virgie! what is it?" asked Ida and Sophie in a breath, astonished at the joyous light which suddenly illumined Virgie's hitherto sad face.

"Read it aloud, mother," was her simple reply.

Mrs. Fontaine read, —

"Well, Virgie, I suppose you hate me like poison. But you need not, for I return you your lover unharmed. When these lines reach you, I shall be Mrs. Lucius Rowsell. The minister is waiting now to marry us; so I will undo the mischief I did, by owning up. Cyril Sherwin never made love to me at all. *He is half crazy now* with love for you. 'Bless you, my children! may you be happy!' Let me make a clean confession while I am about it. My worthy uncle left me only five thousand dollars, not five thousand a year; but I was determined to use it to catch a husband, I hate school-teaching so. The last dollar goes for my *trousseau*; and, as the Rowsells are wealthy, they will not care. No matter if they do: when they find it out, it will be too late. Remember, Cyril never proposed."

To Cyril she simply wrote the following note:—

"'A good riddance to bad rubbish,' you will say when you read this; for I have fled. I was married to Lucius Rowsell ten minutes ago. I have written to Virgie, and exculpated you from the charge of faithlessness. Go to her at once, and insist on seeing my note to her."

Which Cyril did.

After reading Lucilla's heartless lines to Virgie, he turned to his former love, and said, —

"Do you believe her now? Will you forgive me?"

Virgie's answer was to hold out her hand, which Cyril took, and embracing her (the family were still at breakfast when he had rushed in, demanding Lucilla's note), and, kissing her heartily right before her mother, said, —

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Fontaine: I will have some coffee. I have n't eaten a square meal for a month."

Fortunately Ida did not take Lucius's dejection at all to heart. She had never more than liked him; but now her whole affection was bestowed upon a rising young physician, who had offered himself only the preceding evening.

I leave you to fancy the anger and disgust of the Rowsells, father and son, as well as of Lucilla, when each one of the plotters found that the other's money was mythical. They were all, except the Fontaines, outwitted.

HULDAH'S VALENTINE.

BY FLORENCE H. RIRNEY.

The farm-house kitchen was well swept, and dusted, and every pan and pail hung bright and shining on the wall. Huldah Darrock felt that she had the right to a short rest; for all this neatness and brightness was the work of her two little brown hands. She threw herself into a cushioned arm-chair which stood by a window, and, resting her chin on one hand, gazed out on the bare January ground and leafless trees, thinking, not that the dark clouds above her were forerunners of snow, but of Hugh Vansittart.

She was a busy, industrious little woman, —this chestnut-haired, brown-eyed Huldah; but she did not consider it a waste of time to sit still for a few moments, and think of one who had been the means of bringing much sunshine into her barren life. She believed Hugh to be all that was noble and good, and, when alone, dreamed over the many pleasant things he had said to her, and built castles in the air in which he reigned king.

Huldah's mother was a nervous, peevish woman, who imagined herself a great sufferer from ill health, and never attempted the slightest management of or assistance with her household affairs, leaving the burden and brunt of work and care to fall on the young shoulders of her daughter. She spent her days on the parlor sofa, surrounded by old newspapers, magazines, and the last novels from the circulating library of Harwich, a small town two miles distant from the farm.

Huldah meanwhile washed and ironed, baked, swept, and dusted, from Monday morning until Saturday night; and on Sunday too, for that matter. She was only twenty, and had all a young girl's yearnings and ambitions. She hated her poverty, she grew weary of the eternal dull routine of hard work, and felt that she deserved a better lot in life. She was not perfect, you see; not one of those sweet martyrs who are never weary of well-doing, and never complain of the hardships of life. She was only a very faulty but very dutiful and kind daughter; and she patched, mended, and

damaged, without outward show of vexation of spirit, and without hope of reward, for her parents, and for Solomon, Jacob, and Noah, her three romping, boisterous brothers, who seemed to think "Sister Huldah" a machine to be kept going by regular wind-ing.

Perhaps this life seemed harder to her than ever before after she met Hugh Vansittart. Perhaps the dreariness and barrenness of her life showed more glaringly when she contrasted it with the ease of his; and her temper was not as even and sweet as of yore, much to the surprise of her brothers, who were unable to account for this change in their sister, and, for reasons which may be readily imagined, regretted it deeply.

Hugh Vansittart had bought a fine estate known as the "Bluebell Farm," situated about three miles from Huldah's home, and on the road to Harwich. He kept an overseer, a gardener, several field-men, and several house-servants, and raised blooded stock, which he sold in the large cities at prices which had made him a rich man long before he ever saw Huldah Darrock. He had gone to Europe seven years before my story opens, and had remained there nearly the whole of that time, leaving his overseer in charge of his stock-farm. But now he had been home five months, and was mingling freely with his neighbors, charming them all with the perfect breeding he always displayed, and by the generous, frank dealings he had with them, in which he never sought to be the only party benefited.

Huldah had met him at a large quilting-bee dance given in the neighborhood, where he was the life of the party, and chose her for his partner in the Virginia reel. She had been amazed at what she considered a great compliment, but was completely dumbfounded when he asked permission to escort her home, and actually walked the whole way without once regretting the long distance.

She did not know, poor child, the charm that her wild-rose face and innocent brown eyes had for this world-weary man who had

known so few women in whose hearts dwelt the freshness and purity which lay in hers, and was shown so plainly by every word that she uttered, and every stray glance she gave.

After that first introduction, Hugh Vansittart seldom rode into Harwich without stopping at Farmer Darrock's, and asking for Huldah. Sometimes he brought her flowers, fruit, or a new magazine, unaware that the boys ate the fruit, and Mrs. Darrock appropriated the flowers and the magazines. Fortunately for Huldah, however, she cared more for the words that Hugh Vansittart spoke than for all the flowers and fruit and books he could have brought her. She saw her brothers eat the luscious peaches and pears without a pang at her heart, and took pleasure in her mother's enjoyment of the flowers. She felt sure that Hugh cared for her. In a hundred ways he had told her of his preference, though words of love had never passed his lips. When the moonlight stole into Huldah's room, she would kneel down by her little, small-paned window, and look out across the meadows and fields in the direction Bluebell Farm lay, and wonder if Hugh was enjoying the moonlight also, and dreaming of a brown-eyed mistress for his handsome home.

The sound of swiftly coming feet roused Huldah from her reverie in the old arm-chair; and she started up with a sigh as the door of the kitchen was thrown violently open, and her three brothers, aged nine, seven, and five years respectively, came bursting in. Solomon had lost his hat, Jacob's jacket was badly torn in the back, and one of the knees of Noah's diminutive knickerbockers was suffering from a compound, complicated fracture.

Solomon began, —

"I say, Huld'y," —

"Before you say anything," interrupted his sister, "I want to ask you where your hat is."

"It fell down the well," replied Solomon. "We poked and rammed around there with a stick about fifteen hours, and could n't get it."

"Say fifteen minutes, and you will be nearer the truth," said Huldah. "Jacob, how did you" —

"But I say, Huld'y," interrupted Solomon, "can't we let Noah down in the well-bucket? He can fish up the hat real easy

if we let him down, you know. Can't we, Huld'y?"

"Certainly not," cried Huldah, aghast at the very idea of thus risking little Noah's neck.

"You never let us do anything," complained Solomon.

"We never have any fun at all," cried Jacob.

"I'd like to see the fishes down there," said Noah, whimpering; "and we can't get the hat 'less I go down in the bucket."

"Don't ask me again, for you can't do it," said Huldah firmly. "And now, Mr. Jacob, how did you tear that jacket of yours?"

"Well, you see, Huld'y, I shinned up a tree, and my jacket caught in a branch, and tore like the dickens. If ma will get such rotten old stuff, she must just expect it to split."

"And, O Noah! just look at the state of your breeches," sighed Huldah. "I made those knickerbockers only last week for you."

"Well, do you 'spect trouts to last for ever and ever and ever?" said Noah, in an injured tone. "If you was a boy, you'd see how quick they wore out."

"Well, I can't mend them now," said Huldah; "for it is time I was getting supper ready. But you all deserve to be punished, Jacob especially. Solomon, you can go out, and split some wood; Jacob, sit down in that chair until I say you can get up; and, Noah, take this pan of meal and potato-peelings, and feed the chickens."

Solomon departed, grumbling as he went; Jacob threw himself into the chair that his sister had designated; and Noah, growling that all the hard work came on him, lifted the big pan of chicken-feed in both hands, and started for the door, which Solomon had conveniently left open.

The next instant Huldah heard a crash; and, turning from the teapot which she was setting on the stove, she saw the pan upside down on the floor, its contents scattered in every direction. And to think of the labor poor Huldah had been to in order that the floor might be white and spotless! No wonder she was angry, and turned quickly to Noah, who wailed, —

"It was Jacob; and he done it a-purpose. I was goin' out, and he kicked the bottom of the pan with his foot as hard as ever he could."

"Jacob!" cried Huldah, "you did that to spite me. But I shall punish you well for it."

But, before she had said three words, the curly-headed culprit bounded from his seat, and sprang out of the kitchen-door like a deer.

Huldah rushed after him, and, chasing him through farm-yard and stables, finally caught him in the front yard, where she administered a good shaking, the unhappy little wretch screaming at the top of his lungs the while, though he was not a particle hurt.

The sound of wheels and horses' hoofs caused Huldah to look up, when she saw, driving by, the man of whom she had been so fondly dreaming only half an hour before. Yes, — it was Hugh Vansittart; and his face wore an amused look as his steady blue eyes took in the condition of affairs in the front yard of Farmer Darrock's home. But he did not speak; neither did he stop his buggy, as was his usual custom, for a few moments' pleasant chat with Huldah Darrock.

The girl's hands relaxed their grasp on Jacob's jacket, which had not been improved by the shaking given its wearer; and her brown eyes, from which all anger had died out, gazed helplessly after the retreating vehicle.

Oh! what would he think of her? Of course he would never again come to see her. How ill-tempered and unladylike she must have appeared to him! How unfortunate that he should have driven by just at that miserable moment when she was punishing Jacob! And how untidy she looked! Her hair had fallen down over her shoulders during the chase, and was disheveled and streaming in the January wind. Her dress had been torn out at the gathers by Jacob's revengeful hands; and her face was flushed, her rumpled collar hanging by one pin.

Ready to cry with vexation, Huldah turned and walked slowly back to the kitchen, listening with sick heart meanwhile to the jubilant shouts of the uninjured Jacob, who was assisting his brothers in a war-dance of victory.

Poor Huldah! There was very little elasticity in her step, and her face looked worn and sad, as she went about her preparations for the evening meal. She could not forget the scene which had been enacted before

the eyes of Hugh Vansittart; and she could not rid her memory of the amused look which his handsome face had worn as he drove slowly by the farm. He had not stopped to speak to her; and that was proof positive that he had been disgusted with the temper she had displayed. She built no more castles as she steeped the tea. She did not even reproach Jacob when he came into the kitchen, and walked through the chicken-feed on the floor, leaving tracks all over the kitchen. She took a floor-cloth, and, without an impatient murmur, wiped up the mess he had made. Her heart was too heavy with a great grief to be touched with minor annoyances.

Eight o'clock came; and Solomon, Jacob, and Noah were piloted up-stairs to bed. Never were children more trying. Solomon flatly refused to say his prayers; Jacob careered wildly about in a costume suitable only for a warm climate and complete seclusion; while Noah sat rigidly in a seat, unmovable and dumb. Huldah was in despair. She spanked Solomon soundly, and tumbled him, crying, into his trundle-bed. Jacob was treated in a like manner, and also succumbed. But Noah proved stubborn. He sat like a statue, and dumbly refused to disrobe. Huldah begged and persuaded in vain. Even the promise of having "Jack the Giant-Killer" told in all its details had no effect. A bribe of a big red apple was scornfully refused. What was to be done?

At last, when every argument had failed, Huldah blew out the bedroom candle, and, leaving the little statue still seated in his chair, ran down the stairs, and into the dark parlor, where she wrapped a rug about her shoulders, and curled up on the sofa. There she indulged in a good, hearty, relieving burst of tears, and then tried to think calmly over the events of the past few months, and of this unlucky day in particular.

Only the week previous, Hugh Vansittart had been talking with her about St. Valentine's Day, approving of the pretty custom of sending love-letters and sentimental verses to sweet-hearts and friends on that day.

"The best day in all the year for a fellow to propose," he had said. "Surely the maiden could not be hard-hearted on the fourteenth day of February, of all days in the year."

There was something in the way the words were spoken which caused Huldah's heart to beat fast and high with ecstasy. Hugh had bent low over her, and taken her hand, and the girl's cheeks had flushed hotly.

"Have you ever tried your luck in that way?" she had asked, with a vain attempt to speak merrily.

"No; but I may some day," he had replied.

How Huldah dwelt on the memory of those words now, as she lay in the dark parlor, shivering with cold, even though the rug was about her shoulders. Oh, could she wait for St. Valentine's Day? She felt in a fever of impatience for it to come. But after the disgraceful scene he had witnessed, would Hugh send her a valentine?

"Huldah," said a voice, proceeding from a nude figure in the doorway, "I've undressed myself, but I can't find my nightgown."

It was Noah!

Several days passed by, and still Hugh Vansittart had not called at Farmer Darrock's. Huldah had hoped that he would come, and she might be enabled to give some faint apology for her attacks on Jacob, and see by her lover's eyes that he did not feel changed in heart because of it. But no opportunity for either apology or explanation was given her, for though she ran to the window whenever she heard the roll of wheels and the trampling of hoofs, not a glimpse did she gain of Hugh Vansittart. It was always some old farmer going into Harwich, or a market wagon. She was at last forced to take the sorrowful conclusion that Hugh had preferred another road into Harwich since that unlucky day of Jacob's shaking.

Still, she looked forward anxiously to the fourteenth of February; why, she hardly knew. But her hope was that on that day Hugh would forgive and forget, and send her such relief from the anxieties which now oppressed her.

"By the way," said Mr. Darrock, as he sat with his family at the dinner-table on the thirteenth of February, "I have kept forgetting to ask if any of you have heard when Mr. Vansittart is to be home. I want to see what he will take for that big, red cow with the branded shoulder. I hope he will be reasonable about the price."

"I did not even know of his being away," said Huldah, trying to speak calmly and coolly.

"Oh, yes, he went away about the last of January. To Burlington, I think. The overseer said he'd be gone about two weeks, so it's time he was back again. I met Vansittart at the railway station, and he told me to remember him to you, Huldah. The overseer was good enough to give me a ride home. I like that man, and I believe he is honest about Vansittart's affairs. Now, how much should you say I might afford for that cow? She's the best beast in the herd, I believe."

But Huldah was not listening to her father's garrulous talk; did not hear his question about the cow. She was thinking only that Hugh had gone away the very day she had shaken Jacob, so it was explained now why he had not called on her since. He had not been disgusted with her then; had not resolved never to see her more; did not drive into Harwich by another road than the one which led by her home. What content these thoughts gave her! what a relief to her mind to know that he had been absent, not fickle, as she had tremblingly feared. The round blue eyes of her three brothers staring at her in significance and amusement startled her from her reverie. She blushed deeply, whereupon a hoot came from Jacob, and Solomon murmured something about "our rich beau," too low for his father to hear, but distinctly audible to Huldah.

She hurried through with the washing of the tea-dishes that night, meaning to go to bed early, and thus have an undisturbed chance of dreaming over her present prospects, and speculating on what the morrow would bring her. She hoped for so much!

By reason of the haste made about the dishes, the boys were called to go to bed a full half-hour before the time they generally performed this disagreeable duty.

"It's the meanest thing you've ever done to us boys, Huldah," said Solomon, stamping on the floor in his anger.

"I'm glad your beau saw you whip me in the front yard," said Jacob, unconsciously lighting on the sore spot in his sister's heart, and probing it well. "He must have seen then what a mean temper you've got toward your little brothers."

"I believe I'll sit in a chair and not undress, like I did before," croaked Noah.

"Huldy, will you tell us a story for putting us to bed so early?"

"Tell about Jack and the giant-killer," cried Jacob and Noah together.

"No," said Huldah, as she tucked the clothes closer about the three figures in the trundle-bed, "I don't feel like telling stories tonight. Some other time I will tell you about Jack," and she blew out the candle and left the room amid a chorus of yells of "Oh, how mean!" "Spiteful old thing!" "I'll pay you up, Huldah Darrock," and so forth.

If some intuition had only told her how the refusal to tell that story would influence the next year of her life, I think Huldah Darrock would have been glad to grind out stories of Jacks and giants until midnight. But no intuition whispered to her to grant her brothers' request, and being anxious to indulge in the luxury of her own thoughts, she went to her own room at once, and was soon in her small white bed, her mind full of St. Valentine's Day, and eager to see if it would bring her the bliss she coveted.

There never dawned a brighter St. Valentine's Day than this one so eagerly and impatiently waited for by Huldah. The weather was propitious, and the girl's heart beat high with hope.

"Will you go for the mail, Solomon?" she asked, in her most pleasant tones, as soon as breakfast was over, and the boys were putting on their coats and hats to go to the farm-yard.

"Yes. I was goin' into Harwich, anyhow; so I can stop for your mail," replied the boy, with an air of importance.

"You can ride the gray mare, she is so gentle; and do be real careful of the letters, Sol. You won't drop any, will you?"

"You appear awful anxious all at once," said Solomon, in a huffy tone. "I never have dropped any yet, have I?"

Then he went out, and saddled the gray mare, while Jacob and Noah looked on.

"You 'll get a hideous one, won't you, Sol?" asked little Noah, as his eldest brother led the mare to the horse-block, and mounted.

"You bet I will!" was the answer, given with energy. "I'll make her sick of putting me to bed before dark."

And he rode off.

"We 'll be at the old tree in about an hour," shouted Jacob after him.

An hour later, Huldah stood at the door

of the kitchen, gazing down the road. Why had not Solomon come? Oh, dear! he was never so long before. Where could the boy be?

If Huldah had possessed the gift of second sight, she might have seen her brother Solomon sitting under an old chestnut-tree, half a mile down the road, in one hand a letter, in the other a comic, one-cent valentine representing an ugly girl, in an untidy dress, holding in one hand a stout switch, and in the other the collar of a poor, abject-looking little boy, whose tears were falling plentifully. Beneath this striking picture were several lines of the sort of doggerel common to penny valentines.

"You 'll never get married, my pretty young miss.

Your temper's the worst I ever have seen;
Your mouth is too ugly to ask for a kiss;
Your eyes would cut what was put them
between."

"Is n't it just splendid?" said Jacob, who with Noah was gazing admiringly on the highly colored production.

"Yes, just the thing," answered Solomon. "I did n't expect to get one as good as this: it just suits old Huldy. But now, boys, about the letter?"—in a doubtful tone.

"I 'd do it," said Jacob, with a determined shake of the head. "We ought to pay her up; and if you put it in an envelope, and direct it yourself, Sol, she will know right off that we sent it."

"I can open this envelope real easy," said Sol. "It don't stick at all except in one little place."

"Hurry up and do it," said Noah: "I 'm getting awful shivery."

"You 'll never tell as long as you breathe the breath of life, will you?" asked Sol, in an awe-inspiring tone.

"Never!" cried Jacob and Noah together.

"Then I 'll do it. We will be even with her, anyhow," said Sol.

With careful fingers he lifted the flap of the white envelope, and drew forth the letter therein inclosed.

"I wonder who it's from?" said Jacob.

"I don't know; and it would take me too long to spell it out. Anyhow, I would n't read Huldy's letters: that would be a mean trick," answered Solomon. "But what shall I do with it now I have got it out?"

"Put it in this hole in the trunk of the

tree," said Jacob. "It will be safe there, and if we ever want it again we can get it."

This advice was followed, and then the comic valentine was securely sealed in the big envelope, and, with a hint to his younger brothers to be as "secret as the tomb," Solomon mounted the gray mare, which had been tethered to a tree during the conference, and rode on to the house, where Huldah met him with ill-concealed anxiety, and almost tore the letter from his hand.

She knew the writing on the envelope at the first glance. It was Hugh's! Too delighted and fluttered to open it before Solomon, she flew to her own little room, so happy that she almost sang. For a few moments she sat with the letter in her hand, almost afraid to open it, she felt so sure of its contents, and this suspense was fraught with such ecstasy.

Another moment, and the comic valentine was spread open on her lap. She gazed at it mutely, too much stunned by her terrible disappointment to even think. Then, as she realized the overthrow of every hope, every bright dream shattered, and the terrible significance of the picture before her, she burst into a flood of tears. She never doubted for an instant that Hugh had sent it. The handwriting on the envelope was sufficient to convince her of that. How cruel he was! how cutting in his sarcasm! Almost sick with grief, Huldah threw herself on her bed, and cried until she fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the three boys were talking jubilantly over the success of their scheme, and rejoicing at having at length "paid Huldah off."

It was high noon when Huldah awoke from her feverish sleep. With the first moment of waking came the memory of that terrible valentine. She took the envelope from the floor where it had fallen, and gazed long at the clear, regular superscription, characteristic of the penman.

"There is no possible doubt that he sent it," sighed Huldah, "for it has the Burlington postmark."

"Huldy," screamed Solomon's voice, "are you never going to give us any dinner? Was your letter so awful long that you had to stay up-stairs all this time?"

So the poor girl went again to the kitchen, and, with red eyes and flushed face, began the preparations necessary for the noonday meal.

Hugh Vansittart waited in vain for an answer to his letter. When a week passed, and he received none, his chagrin and disappointment were boundless.

"I felt so sure she loved me," he thought; "and I wanted to get her out of that dreary home, where she works so hard, poor little thing! I wonder how she feels about me? Well, I shall never know now, of course. I guarded against that; for it is easier to bear her silence than it would be to read a long letter full of excuses for not accepting me. I must try to bear my disappointment quietly."

But he found his disappointment so hard to bear, that, after a three-days' visit to Bluebell Farm, — during which he did not go within a mile of Farmer Darrock's, — he settled up his affairs, left his overseer in charge of his estate and stock, and went off to Europe again.

Huldah heard the news of his departure from a gossiping neighbor, and then indeed did all hope die out of her heart. Until she heard that he really had gone, and had not said when he would return, she had not known how the hope had grown in her heart of meeting him some day, and hearing him say he was sorry for sending the ugly valentine.

She went about the house, working as hard as ever; but now she took no interest, no pleasure, in life. She meant to do her duty by her family as long as she lived; but she looked forward to no pleasant home of her own, no joy in the future. Dark clouds had gathered over her life just when it seemed brightest; and she rebelled against this strange dispensation.

By degrees the hue of health deserted her cheeks, her eyes grew lustreless, her step languid. It was no wonder that she changed, for she spent all her leisure hours in brooding over the past, and sighing over the present. She never complained of the work, she never scolded or reproached the boys for any mischief they did, — though, for some reason, the boys were very obedient and pleasant to their sister in these days. They never objected to going early to bed; they never asked for stories, or tracked mud on the floors, now; and Huldah noticed their good behaviour, but felt too weary-hearted to wonder over it.

"Huldah," said Mrs. Darrock one morning as the year was drawing to a close, "you seem dreadfully puny of late; and

you have been very slack about your work for some months past."

"Yes," answered Huldah. "I take no interest in it; and I feel tired all the time."

The three boys were sitting in the kitchen as Huldah spoke; but when she stopped, and leaned her head on her hand, with a hopeless look in her large brown eyes, they all rose, and went softly out in the yard.

"I say," began Jacob, "I can't stand this any longer."

And his voice was husky.

"Do you s'pose he's ever coming back?" asked little Noah.

"The overseer said yesterday that he'd be back in two weeks," answered Solomon. "Jacob, do you suppose we better give her the letter now?"

"No, it would n't do any good," Jacob said drearily. "It's his business to give it to her. I know that's what is worrying her, for she's never been like our Huldah since last Valentine's Day."

"And her face showed she expected something good that day. Boys, we did her a mean trick!"

"But we will make it all right," said little Noah.

Hugh Vansittart had found it impossible to stay the year out in Europe. He could not forget Huldah Darrock; and some mysterious influence seemed calling him home. On the thirteenth of February he reached Bluebell Farm, and on the morning of the fourteenth sat in his warm, handsomely furnished library looking over some papers, and trying to forget that it was St. Valentine's Day, and just a year since he had sent an offer of his heart and home to Huldah Darrock.

A knock came at the door; and, on Hugh's saying "Enter," James, the waiter, put in his head.

"There's three little boys here to see you, Mr. Vansittart, and they won't tell me what their business is."

"Send them in to me, James," said Hugh.

A moment more, and Solomon, Jacob and Noah fled into the library.

Hugh sprang up eagerly as soon as he recognized his young visitors.

"I am so glad to see you, boys; and how is your dear sister?" he said.

"It's about her we've come, Mr. Vansittart," said Solomon, while Jacob and Noah began to tremble over the prospect of

witnessing the wrath of this rich man over the tale which was to be unfolded to him.

"What is it about,—Miss Huldah?" asked Hugh kindly.

Then, with faltering voice, and many apologies, Solomon told his tale of woe. They had only changed the contents of the envelope for fun; had never thought about the letter being of importance; did not know who had written it until one day, a couple of months before, Solomon had gone to the old oak-tree, dug out the letter, and spelled out the name at the bottom.

"And when we knew by that who sent it to Huldah, we were awful sorry, and thought you'd never come home, Mr. Vansittart,—the time seemed so long to us. And we have brought you the letter; and won't you please copy it, and send it to Huldah again today, so she will be happy once more?"

And Solomon broke down into sobs as he made his request, and put into Hugh's hand a dirty, yellow sheet of paper, which he hardly recognized as the production over which he had spent so much thought.

Huldah was sitting in the parlor, alone. In one hand she held a dusting-brush, which she had just been using, in the other the hideous valentine she had received the year before. She had just heard from her father that Hugh Vansittart had returned home the previous evening, and she had brought out the valentine as a scourge to the warm feelings which would persist in springing up in her breast.

The sound of her name, spoken by a voice which she had not yet forgotten, caused her to drop both valentine and dusting-brush, and start forward, with white cheeks, to hold out her hand to Hugh Vansittart.

"Huldah, I want you to read this letter before you speak a word to me."

And he held out to her the soiled, yellow sheet which he had received from the boys only an hour before.

She took it from him, and opened it with fingers which trembled very perceptibly. Her breath came in labored gasps as she stood before him, reading this declaration of love, ending with the request that if her answer could not be a favorable one, she should preserve an utter silence respecting it, and the writer would understand that he was rejected.

"I never saw this before," she said, not raising her eyes as she spoke.

"But you see it now, dear Huldah: you can give me an answer now. Tell me, dearest, am I not loved?"

She could not speak, — her joy was too great for words, — but she raised to his the large brown eyes, from which all sorrow and pain had fled; and he read his answer in them, and folded her to his heart.

"Huldy, do you forgive us?" asked Solomon, Jacob, and Noah, filing into the room, and speaking in chorus.

Hugh had just finished telling Huldah of the trick the boys had played; but she was too happy to chide them, and freely pardoned them for bringing to her such suffering as she had endured for the past year.

Long before another Valentine's Day came round, the bells of the little Episcopal Church at Harwich rang merrily for the wedding of Hugh Vansittart and Huldah Darrock.